SELF-RELIANCE

SELF-RELIANCE

A PRACTICAL AND INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF METHODS OF TEACHING SELF-RELIANCE, INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY TO MODERN CHILDREN

on title card only

By

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years have passed since this small book was written and offered to mothers. To be fifteen years old puts out of commission nowadays almost any book not a work of creative imagination. Even that oldest of subjects, archæology is, in the light of new excavations and discoveries, hauled about and made over from one year to the next. And there is no subject in which more excavation and more new discoveries have been made than in the study of childhood. In the years since this book was written with little more "research" back of it than experience and reflection, acute and well-informed minds have dug deep into the causes of children's actions and emotions. The roots of the facts with which mothers have to deal have been traced; something has been learned (and much has been guessed) about the relative importance of the root and the soil provided for it. Mothers have heaps of professional books on child-psychology to consult where, fifteen years ago, were only a few amateurs like the author of this book and a few professional psychologists who did not dream of addressing themselves to so unimportant a part of the race as the mothers of it.

These changes made me wonder, when it was

proposed to print a new edition of "Self-Reliance," whether in these much-informed days it could be worth anybody's while to read it. On re-reading it myself to find out, I thought that perhaps the extremely concrete and simple nature of its suggestions had kept it in another compartment from the going-out-of-date kind. I thought how many folk proverbs about good health have never gone out of date although formulated long before the period of laboratories and scientific knowledge of the human body. With variations as to rhyme and degrees of outspokenness, all such aphorisms that I have ever heard express in old-fashioned language the advice that the head should be kept cool and composed, the feet warm and dry, the mind cheerful, and the processes of elimination active. The latest bacteriological discoveries do but underline such homely counsel.

As far as the subject of this book goes, it is anything but outdated. Modern discoveries in psychology do not prove self-reliance for children less important than I thought it but vastly more. If I were writing it now I would certainly not leave in at the beginning the half-apology for writing a whole book, even if a small and unpretentious one, about ways in which to help children learn to rely on themselves. A young and modern reader can not realize to what a dense indifference about children's ways

that apology was addressed. In so short a time as fifteen years, such indifference has not only vanished but been forgotten. No publisher now would dream of explaining in his advertisements of a book on child-training (as the pioneer publishers of such books did) that really after all, when you think of it with an open mind, bringing up children *is* a subject worthy of thought and presenting some difficulties. No, if I were re-writing the book to-day it would not be necessary to try at the start to disarm any reader's feeling that the importance of the subject was being exaggerated. No reader would have such a feeling. It has been pried out of his mind by all the modern talk about the dangers of feeling inferior. If the book were to be named to-day, it would probably not be called "Self-Reliance" because that might be thought to have a dusty, Matthew-Arnoldish flavor, but perhaps, "Conquering the Inferiority Complex." It would find itself, moreover, on the library shelf beside a dozen others with titles all containing that phrase.

I am not sorry to have it keep its old plain name as it goes out again on its old errand. It suggests, I hope, something of what it is, no theoretical discussion of the inner need of the child to attain independence, but a number of definite folk-simple suggestions as to ways and means by which in ordinary life that process may be helped along. If it were

a theoretical discussion there would be no need to issue it in yet another edition. Maybe books much deeper and more scientific than would be within my capacity have been written to champion that right of the child to learn how to depend on himself which I so simple-heartedly took for granted. Learned people have at last turned their eyes on a part of humanity which has been, more than any other, fantastically and outrageously oppressed by tyrants, and far more than slaves,—proletariats,—women,—or people with dark skins, has been helpless in the hand of the oppressor. For it was not loving mothers, ready to lay down their lives for their children, who first felt the affronts to human dignity involved in the way children are treated—nor was it generous-hearted poets, on fire with sympathy for suffering. This enlightenment has come from psychologists and those specialists whose profession brings them into contact with the mental ills of adults. They are the ones who have seen that children, especially in the modern world, spend long and impressionable years as involuntary parasites, and who have reflected that the position of a parasitic dependent is not a congenial, happy, or natural one for any human being save one who has the soul of a parasite. And this, thank Heaven, few of any younger generation ever have. The question of self-reliance is now seen to be bound up with the matter of self-

respect, one of the recognized bases of a healthy life. Many of the disagreeable doings of children, from bragging and bullying to teasing and cringing, from "showing off" to morbid shyness, are found to be despairing, inexpert attempts to escape from inferiority to equality. And many strange miseries of grown-up existence are proved to be scars left from too long and too thorough-going an experience of helplessness.

To be entirely dependent for any security in life on another faulty human being—that situation traditionally drives to madness anybody with a decent amount of self-respect. But that is the situation of the younger generation, not only (as in former times) in young childhood, when it is biologically natural and necessary, but during the long period also of education and professional training. Years after they are biologically adult they are economically (and hence according to modern logic) morally dependent on others, still inadequate to meet life standing alone. The cultivation of self-reliance under such conditions becomes constantly more necessary and more difficult.

Freud and Jung and Adler and all the rest may have put filial respect to worthless parents on the shelf between crinoline and side-whiskers, and shut up autocratic parental authority in the museum-case, along with powdered wigs, but they have not put

self-reliance on the list of old-fashioned virtues. On the contrary, it is the only escape from their modern dragon of the inferiority complex.

As to the treatment of the subject in the following pages, there are some places over which the passage of time has cast a color of ingenuous quaintness. On the page, for instance, which contains a plea that children be allowed to learn early the ways of modern life, such as tipping waiters, ordering meals in restaurants, buying railroad tickets and the like, and that their adequacy in such ways be not hampered by the sentimental desires of their elders that "children should be kept young." Such desires have vanished from the world like dew at noon-day. Even at the time that passage was written, such elders were not of the generation of parents, but officious great-aunts and great-uncles and grandparents, now gone to their reward, if any. The reference to them is left in the book partly for the sake of its picturesque reminder of old-time folk, and partly to make busy modern parents remember that competence in such ways is, even yet, not innate, like the much-talked-of and newly discovered discomposure of babies on feeling themselves falling off a table.

Another long passage, now quite out of date (from the beginning of Chapter XV on) is also left in the book as an interesting example of a near-

prophecy. People who were school-children when it was made are parents now, and probably think that Parent-Teacher Associations are among the basic institutions of These States. It may give them a little historical perspective to know that an American mother, writing only fifteen years ago, proposed as an innovation that parents should take an active interest in schools. Or rather that Women's Clubs should, for not in her liveliest flights of imagination did she see fathers organized and associated with mothers and school-teachers. Beside providing historical perspective, it may hearten modern fathers and mothers to know that so great a change can come in so short a time. Who knows —perhaps in another fifteen years the P. T. A., or some successor to it, may be successfully forcing progressive education down the throats of contractors and politicians and moss-backed "educators," and insisting on having the money's-worth of their school-taxes, not in larger buildings and shinier varnish on the woodwork of schoolrooms, but in more numerous, better-paid, better-trained, bigger-souled and freer-minded teachers. Perhaps in another fifteen years the P. T. A. and its allies will have advanced to triumph under such banners as "Down with college-entrance examinations!" "Equal educational opportunities for motor-minded children!" "Not more than twenty students to any one

teacher!" "Spontaneity of interest as important as good teeth!" and other mottoes as apparently foredoomed to failure now as, fifteen years ago, was the idea that parents had any rights in schools at all.

The suggestions about the possible help to be given in schools by amateur parents will seem, like the suggestions about out-of-door life being shared by all the family, almost purely historical to certain prosperous modern readers in prosperous modern communities. Looking at their own expensive highly organized modern schools, they will see that all the leadership of boys and girls in outside activities so earnestly recommended to parents in this book, is being done—but not by parents. Such people can be imagined as saying to themselves, "Since those naïve suggestions were made, the process of turning into a profession with trained and salaried workers what used to be considered parental care has been carried out to a finish. Domestic science teachers manage hot lunches at schools and initiate girls into the household arts much better than their mothers ever did. Paid athletic coaches lead the students in well-organized Athletic Associations. Paid playground supervisors teach them all the necessary games. The Girl Scout and Boy Scout organizations have enlarged their membership and extended their influence till for most growing American youth they represent a far greater influence

for the formation of character than their fathers and mothers. Nursery schools take charge of two-year-olds who from that time are brought up by professionally trained attendants. Why bother their parents with any suggestions at all about how to manage children?"

This picture of the contents of a typical, modern sophisticated mind is, I believe, a faithful representation of the mind. But not of the facts. Such an idea of the conditions of modern child-life is as accurately truthful as the traditional remark that "everybody" leaves New York City for the summer vacation. Such a statement expresses changing ideas rather than already changed facts. More than fifteen years are required to transform the framework of real life. Out of the millions of growing girls in the U. S. A. less than two hundred thousand are enrolled as Girl Scouts. Whatever may be *their* condition, the others still need help from their families. A glance at comparative statistics about American schools reveals an almost negligible number that have anything like money enough for domestic science teachers, athletic coaches and paid playground supervisors. And as yet so few nursery schools exist compared to the number of young children at home, that they are scarcely perceptible.

By and large, up and down our suburban and village streets and country roads, American mothers

of the present generation, just like their mothers, are shut up in their own separate homes, struggling to do their unprepared best by children not less disconcerting and perplexing because passionately loved; and as new to their parents as if they were the first ever born. Such mothers have what the older generation had not, plenty of books on child-psychology and a public opinion which permits them, unmolested by ridicule, to study that subject; and it is safe to say that they know forty times more about the principles which underlie child welfare than their grandmothers did (which is, after all, not saying much). But still, in the nature of things, however modern and enlightened they are, they remain young and inexperienced. They have had little practise in the new art they are professing. Most of them, moreover, are hard-pressed by the material care of their children and their households. They are often, as mothers have ever been, too hurried and distracted by the innumerable details of their new occupation to be able to invent, on the spur of the moment, suitable, workable ways to put into practise the sound principles which in theory they know very well. It is for such mothers, at such moments, that this book is re-issued.

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER.

SELF-RELIANCE

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CHAPTER I

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

I ONCE knew a village cobbler who maintained that all the troubles of mankind originate in badly fitting shoes. No amount of ridicule or criticism could shake his conviction that the universe centered in his trade. When some scoffer inquired, "Do you expect me to believe that if Benedict Arnold had worn the right kind of shoes he'd not have been a traitor?" the old shoemaker stuck to his guns. "He'd have been a better man, let me tell you. He'd have been a better man, and nobody knows how far that might have gone."

As I begin a book on self-reliance and responsibility in child life, I force myself to remember that naively bumptious shoemaker, but I find that I am not sufficiently warned by his example. I bring to my mind the fact that there are other problems in the world: the problem of the unemployed, of capital and labor, of the transportation of farm produce to market. But I find deep in my heart, untouched

by this attempt to be reasonable, the profound conviction that most questions of modern life would be answered if we could but solve the knotty problem of how best to teach children to stand on their own feet, to shoulder the responsibility for their own actions, to accept with enlightened willingness their fair share in the world's work.

Therefore, fortified by the reflection that the author's belief in its necessity is the only possible excuse for adding even the smallest volume to the great multitude of books, I am going to write a book for parents on self-reliance and responsibility. There will be nothing in it that thoughtful parents do not know already, for I am a parent myself, and no educational expert; but it may be of value to have all written out and set down in a book some things we all know, but are very apt to forget in the bewilderment and fatigue and even disheartenment which at times inevitably confuse a parent's mind.

As to the heat of my conviction about the immense importance of teaching responsibility and self-reliance, I shall trust to the reader's good sense, and to the competition of advocates of other social panaceas to give my project its fitting relative value.

The first statement to be made after this declaration of the importance of teaching self-reliance and responsibility is a frank admission of the extreme difficulty of the undertaking in modern conditions.

The whole trend of American life is away from the old, plainly visible, individual responsibility. Of course to a person of clear vision, individual responsibility of a more subtle sort is as much needed as ever in these times of cooperative action. But it is apparent that to muddle-headed people, and to unformed minds like children's minds, the fact that so often in modern America one may press a button and be served, seems to relieve one of any necessity for responsibility about what goes on behind the button. It is also apparent that for the naturally indolent mass of humanity, and for children with no experience of life, there is a great danger of coming to rely so entirely on the electric button and its slaves that the wheels of initiative will be broken, or at least become rusty from long disuse.

Children, with their unthinking acceptance of the world as they find it, need particularly to be aroused from the mental attitude of passivity engendered by the complications and conveniences of modern life. It is no longer necessary for the growing boys of the family to carry water by pailsful in from the well, and it would be foolish to try to cultivate their strength and self-reliance by forcing them back into that archaic, if very invigorating practise. But they need not go to the other extreme and grow up into adolescence with the baby's feeling that water comes out of the pipes in the bathroom as inevitably as

water falls from the clouds in the sky. It takes a great deal more ingenuity on the part of parents than it used to, to give their children the tonic knowledge of the axiom that effort precedes enjoyment, since in many cases it is no longer their own effort which precedes their own enjoyment. A specialist (the plumber) taking advantage of the tabulated experience and intelligence of others, came into the child's home, and by a continuous effort of some days, took away forever the necessity for any effort on any one's part beyond turning a faucet on and off. The modern parent must realize thoroughly how far-reaching that sort of process is, and how ever-present in all phases of the children's life. If the fathers and mothers wish to replace the older direct contact with necessities, by activities tending as surely to self-reliance, they must bestir themselves and find new formulas and new devices. It will not do either to try to use the old ones now become as anachronistic as feudal forms, or simply to let the matter go. Children are thoroughly human and if all their needs are provided for, with little effort on their parts they fall into habits of inertia and moral flabbiness as surely as their elders do under similar conditions. What we parents need to realize is that ordinary modern conditions more and more tend to put children in a passive, receptive mental attitude, and not in an active and masterful

one; and further that we can not better this condition without taking a great deal of very intelligent thought.

Parents must be sure in the first place what they want to do; whether or not they really prefer to inculcate resourcefulness and initiative in their children, or to live through the childhood of their sons and daughters with as little trouble as possible. For it is not only difficult, under modern conditions, to stimulate self-reliance and initiative, but once stimulated these qualities are not conducive to the quiet stagnation in the home which adults (active outside of it) consider the desideratum of home life. Furthermore, there is the instinctive repugnance felt by many parents to what they consider a premature initiation of children into adult activities. As long as adult activities consisted mainly of paring potatoes and baking bread and feeding cattle and making hay, nobody dreamed that there was anything unnatural or precocious in children who were ably doing their share of it. But now that corresponding adult activities include buying railroad tickets, using a time-table, ordering meals in hotels, sending packages by parcels-post and sending telegrams, we feel that we do not want our boys and girls to be made "little old men and women" by too great assurance in handling these modern processes. We rather dislike a boy of sixteen practised enough in the ways

of the world to go easily and with self-confidence through the various details which precede establishing himself in a hotel. It savors of over-sophistication to us. We take a sentimental pleasure in seeing him blushing and abashed before the hotel-clerk, and flurried by the porter, although three generations ago we would have been very impatient of any inability of his to drive the family horse to town on a marketing expedition. What is hard to remember is that in most cases, he no longer needs to have experience in driving the family horse, nor instruction in building stove-fires. If he is to avoid awkward bungling and in many cases serious mistakes in running his life, he needs to be taught how rightly and aptly to use modern tools: precisely how to order a room at a hotel, how to buy his clothes, how to tip a porter, how to buy a theater-ticket, how to make an appointment with the dentist, all with the self-confident faith in himself which will preserve him from being helpless before those who are always ready to prey on helpless uncertainty in whatever form it manifest itself.

I do not mean that all training for children must be concentrated on the tasks they will have to perform when grown up. Many things not in themselves particularly valuable give the greatest help to faculties which are essential to later development. Adults seldom have to use carpenter's tools, and yet

the training a boy gets in a workshop, the ability to coordinate eye and hand which he learns there, will help him whatever the vocation of his maturity may be. Few adults have any practical concern with distinguishing between the different varieties of birds, or knowing a maple from an oak, yet the habit of close observation and assigning facts to their proper categories is an invaluable one. It is well that children should be trained in every pursuit that may tend to develop alertness and accuracy, whether or not the pursuit is in itself likely to have permanent value; but it is a pity that even the children who are lucky enough to have mind and character-training planned for them outside the schoolroom, should have their attention concentrated as it generally is on handcrafts and nature study, and on nothing else. There are so many other pursuits just as stimulating to mental processes, which they have to master some day and which—if taken up early under suitable supervision, are learned with so much less pain!

We need to remember that there is no essential virtue in the old-fashioned home activities, now superseded: the splitting of kindling, the shoveling of snow, the stoking of stoves, the weeding of gardens. They were means to an end in the child's growth. Through them he learned some of the basic facts of life, acquired the splendid habits of

sturdy self-help. But if it is no longer possible to use those means, we must try to find in the modern world the activities which correspond to them. This is so extremely difficult that those parents who have continued to live somewhat under the old régime are to be congratulated on the ease of their task. Activities fit for child-training are ready to their hands, worn and polished and available with the use of past generations. But it is by no means sure that their results will be any better than those attained by an intelligent and resourceful manipulation of modern expedients. The boy who has, as his daily task, the feeding of the poultry yard, learns something about responsibility; but does he learn any more than the boy who has as his responsibility to see to the monthly payment of certain of the family bills? It is even possible that the latter boy may have the start of the first when they both begin modern adult life, since more grown-ups need the habit of regular attention to their accounts than the habit of regularly feeding chickens. But this last distinction is perhaps fanciful; one form of activity has little to recommend it above another: it is the habit of regular responsibility for any recurring task that is the essential.

Parents who analyze the situation down to the bottom, especially to the bottom of their own hearts, are apt to feel that a great deal of the difficulty in

teaching self-reliance to modern children comes more from a common mental attitude than from material conditions. Adults as well as children have their problem of insufficient responsibility. In an industrial society, occupied for the most part to the top of its bent in producing objects, one of the natural impulses of the human heart tends to grow to unhealthy and bloated proportions. This impulse is the desire for material possessions. There are so many things to be possessed nowadays, all our hundreds of thousands of efficiently run factories are turning out so many millions of purchasable articles that ordinary humanity, unwarned and unprepared, is fairly swamped under the facility with which the covetous instinct for possession may be gratified. Many and many a human life is lived out without any other activity than to possess for the sake of possessing. The immense variety of the things possessed blinds us to their deadening inner uniformity —houses, jewels, horses, automobiles, social position, handsome wives, land, buildings—it is not surprising that we are dazzled into thinking that a life's activity might very well consist in acquiring more and yet more. And it is not in the least surprising that children, unless especially provided with opportunities to learn the joys of creative effort, should become thoroughly impregnated with the error of their elders: should feel that the success and

happiness of a life depends upon the multitude of objects possessed rather than in well-regulated activity and self-expression. There can be little initiative or self-reliance inculcated if the inner ideal is of passive and effortless ownership. From their earliest years, modern children need to be set in conditions in which they may learn for themselves that lasting satisfaction comes from a wise employment of their own energies and capacities, and not from a passive ownership of things.

CHAPTER II

SELF-HELP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

MOST individuals feel hopelessly that they can accomplish little for the immediate present by any attempt to modify an existing tradition, since traditions are traditionally so long in the making-over. And for such moments of depression, it is well for us to remember that there is, after all, an infinite deal which in spite of tradition can be done in each individual home, even in the much deprecated modern home. The children are there many hours of the day, even modern children, and the little children are there every hour of the day.

So while we are waiting for the longed-for change in the school system, while we are kneading the fermenting dough of cooperative mass education, and while we are trying to change the American tradition about the joys of property-holding, we can be turning our wits each to his own home, to his own children, to the problem of setting his own house in order. If there is any sense to be made out of modern home conditions, we alone can make it. And since it is always best and simplest to begin at the beginning of anything, it is wise to see how

early in any human life the habit of self-dependence can be begun. In early childhood, at least we are not baffled by the organization of society, and we can not lay the blame on industrialism if our four- and five-year-olds have the habit, when confronted with an obstacle, of asking somebody to remove it for them.

I am going to set down here a little incident which came under my observation lately, and which will serve as the text of this chapter. I sat in the living-room of a neighbor's house, chatting, and watching an energetic baby of twenty months playing with a rubber ball. Presently, "Ball all gone," announced the little boy, lying flat on his stomach and reaching under the piano with one absurdly inadequate fat little arm.

"All right, darling," said the busy mother lovingly, dropping her sewing to reach under and get it for him.

"Why don't you give him a stick and show him how to poke it out for himself?" suggested the tool-using father from his chair.

"Oh, he's too little. He wouldn't understand; he couldn't do it; a baby like that," said the mother fondly.

"I bet he could," replied the father. "Here, Buster, let father show you a trick."

He sat down on the floor with a cane, and mak-

ing the much-interested baby stoop his head to the floor, till he could see just what happened under the piano, he knocked the ball out within reach. The delighted baby ran squealing to pick it up, and promptly threw it back under the piano.

"Oh, naughty boy!" said the mother in gentle reproach, "when poor papa has just got it out for you!"

"Just watch that kid!" said the father, pointing to the prostrate form of the baby. Grunting with determination, the little boy wielded the cane with unspeakable clumsiness. But he kept at it, and finally, as he poked and shoved and prodded, one of his wild strokes hit the ball and rolled it out on the floor. His pride and pleasure were beyond words to describe. He beamed, he shone, he laughed aloud. His eyes were like stars. My heart melted to see him.

The father triumphed, "Smart kid, what?"

But what did the baby do next? He threw the ball back under the piano. His mother triumphed now! "There, you see," she said; "he didn't take in the sense of what you were doing at all! He's just a baby!"

The father, being tool-using but no psychologist, retreated somewhat crestfallen to his chair, and the chat went on in its usual channels. But my thoughts widened and expanded to a new amplitude as I

watched the eager little creature, repeating over and over the exercise which had at a stroke advanced him from the rank of fumbling pawing animal, to be blood-brother to Archimedes. Archimedes' enthusiasm over his lever has come echoing down the ages; but I doubt if it was any more sincere or heartfelt than the wordless joy of that minute specimen of humanity at bursting forever a limitation which had hampered him.

Three days later when he was spending an hour with me, I saw him reach in vain for a block that had been pushed into a far corner of a shelf, and I waited with a real thrill of interest to see if he would call on me to help him. No, the idea did not even occur to him. He looked about alertly, and spying the poker, trotted over to the hearth, his little baby face serene with the blessed tranquillity which comes only from assured competence. He picked up the poker, staggered for a moment under the unexpected weight of the metal, adjusted himself quickly to it, and bore it slowly back to the shelf. As he fumblingly fished for the block and finally knocked it out to the front of the shelf where he could reach it, I was silently exulting in him and saying proudly to myself, "Oh, you little human being! You little tool-using man-child!"

It can be imagined with what exasperation I cried out upon an elderly relative of mine who, looking

up from her book and seeing a child under two years with a poker, swooped down upon him and tore it from his hand.

"Good gracious, auntie! Why in the world did you do that!" I exclaimed, outraged at her meaningless tyranny.

She faced me with stupefaction. "Let a baby play with a poker!" she cried.

"Why not?" I challenged her, although I realized that we were speaking different languages.

She looked as though the very last extremity of modern folly had been reached! "Why, I never heard of such a thing in my life." She cried out: "A child of that age to have a poker! Why, he'll break the windows with it!" She made this statement with absolute certainty, as though she had seen in her day hundreds of babies smashing window-panes with pokers. "Besides," she added conclusively, as she put the offending bit of iron in place, "it gets his hands dirty!"

I did not attempt to reason with her, having had some experience in reasoning with elderly people whose fixed conviction is that children exist only to damage the property of their elders. I knew that nothing I now could say would prevent her from reporting that I advocated letting babies smash windows as a daily recreation. I let that go as so many other similar misconceptions go; but I resolved to

make one of the first chapters of this book a plea for little, little children. People who have not had the honor of being personally acquainted with a little child may feel as they read the pages following that they are being required to look through a magnifying glass at events too small to be seen with the naked eye, and hence negligible in the rough-and-ready economy of the real world. But remembering the fascinated, attentive stare of the trained entomologist on his beetles, let us concede that the actions of a human being even of fifteen months of age, may not be without significance to a sympathetic eye.

The first axiom to bear in mind is one that needs to be repeated over and over at all stages of a child's development, but never more than when his speech is still so imperfect that he can not explain himself. "Find out what the child's purpose is." Ten to one his intention is harmless, if not entirely praiseworthy. It is only the means he takes to accomplish his laudable end that seem malicious or destructive. My bewildered little friend of twenty months had no more intention of smashing the windows with his poker than my aunt has when she takes it up to poke the fire; but with a vocabulary of about sixty nouns and perhaps ten verbs, he could scarcely be expected to explain to her the obstacle that confronted him and the mechanical ingenuity with

which he had overcome it. He could only stare, the corners of his mouth twitching, the tears in his eyes. My aunt was under the impression that she had safeguarded our priceless window-panes by her prompt action. In reality her achievement was far different. She had succeeded in sowing in a child's mind the first seed of distrust of adults, a distrust that would in all probability grow into the habit of concealing from adults all infantile projects, a habit that is designated by adults as sly deceitfulness.

If any one in charge of little children can acquire the habit of invariable and disinterested inquiry into the intentions of the small people the rest almost follows of itself. As a rule the intentions are good, and all that remains to be done is to help the tots carry them out in a way that will not be too troublesome to the family.

For the most part, in early childhood, the new member of the family is busily engaged in learning the ropes, in getting his sea-legs under him, in making himself master of his immediate surroundings, and his chief guide is imitation of his elders. One of the most beneficent results of the dramatically sudden spread of the study of the mental processes of little children, is a new willingness on the part of parents to allow their babies time to experiment with certain frequently recurring processes of their

daily life. Every mother nowadays makes an effort to be patient when the little fingers try clumsily to insert buttons in button-holes, and to tie strings. Every magazine-reading mother nowadays knows that she ought not to hurry these processes, that it is better for the little child to take an hour to put on his own shoes than for his mother to whisk them on for him in thirty seconds. Furthermore, having read of the little washstands and bowls in nursery schools, the low hooks for the children's clothes, the little chairs and tables, most American homes make an effort to provide a similar corner of the house where the little folks may feel themselves at home and not visiting a race of giants. For all this, let it not be forgotten, we have to thank the great Italian educator, Dr. Montessori. But not knowing American homes or (in the first place) writing for them, she did not go on and set forth in detail the further application of her theories under the ordinary conditions of American home life; and we have not shown ourselves notably inventive in doing this for ourselves.

As soon as the average normal child emerges from babyhood, say at fourteen or fifteen months, his instinct for self-help emerges as clearly, with as much emphasis, as his instinct for getting his own way. And curiously enough he is usually forced to fight for the one as strenuously as for the other. If

you will spend one day in watching a healthy child of eighteen or twenty months, you will come to the conclusion that he is straining every nerve to learn how to "do for himself" and his mother is straining every nerve to prevent him, except in certain ways, now stereotyped. Nowadays, remembering the famous Montessori buttoning-frames, she usually lets her little son try to button his own little coat; but she does not teach him how to turn the water-faucet and hold a cup to satisfy his interminably recurring baby thirst. With cherishing care she springs to serve him a dozen times a day, when almost any child of a year and a half can learn in five minutes how to do it for himself. He is better off than most young people of his age if his mother does not hold the cup to his lips as though he were a bedridden invalid. "He gets his dress so wet in front," she says. But to obviate that difficulty she should not now be holding the cup for him; she should, six months before, when he was a year old, have made him a little oil-cloth apron, and setting his high-chair in front of the bathroom wash-bowl, or the kitchen sink, have let him pour water from one cup to another. She would have found that the little scrap of humanity, too young to speak a single intelligible English word, needed no instruction as to the method to train his eyes and muscles in exactitude. Ten minutes a day of that exercise

would have obviated any danger that he would spill water in taking a drink at eighteen months of age. If he is then taught how to turn a faucet, he is in one more respect forever emancipated from the servitude of being waited upon.

Again the mother, reading the stories of little folks in modern day-nurseries, who tuck in their own napkins and feed themselves, is now apt to let her tiny sons and daughters learn to manage a spoon as soon as they show any capacity for doing so; but nothing having been said in books or magazines about bureau drawers, she is very apt to precipitate herself upon a little child trying to shut a drawer, and to cry out as she bears him off to safety: "No, no, baby darling! Baby pinch fingers! Bad drawer. Mama do it for him!" Yet if she sat down on the floor by him and, analyzing the action step by step, showed him how to shut a drawer without pinching his finger, she would find her two-year-old child perfectly capable of doing it deftly and safely. The outward and visible result of this teaching would be his mastery of one more piece of household machinery and the inward and spiritual result would be a strengthening of his self-confidence, his natural desire to do things for himself, and the vigor and accuracy of his muscles—results that are quite worth a ten-minute drill once or twice.

The mother painstakingly repeats over and over

the word the child is trying to pronounce, and she is not discouraged by the stumbling inaccuracy of his unpractised little tongue. The fact that he is interested enough to try it is proof positive that he will soon be able to master it. She never dreams of saying: "No, dearest baby, 'kitty' is too hard a word for baby to say. Let mama say it for him!" The absurdity of that is patent to her. But she does not with equal patience show him over and over how to carry a light stool about and use it to climb up in the armchair he covets. She says: "Does baby want to get into papa's chair? There, mama lift him in!" And then mama must lift him out, of course! This furnishes a delightful passage in mama's life, with a chance at which all of us besotted mothers are only too eager to snatch, of hugging the sweet small body and kissing the round cheeks. It is quite a bother to show him over and over how to climb up on his stool and thereafter to watch over the first experiments, to safeguard the inevitable first upsets. But if she is looking out for the best interests of the small person under her charge, rather than for a good excuse to give him a hug, she will patiently insist upon the use of the stool, whenever it is possible.

A small light stool as an extension of his short stature is as essential a part of a baby's outfit, as the small light stick that extends the reach of his baby

arm. Do not fear that he will use his stick to knock off the ornaments from the mantel-piece. In the first place he can't reach them, even with his stick, and in the second, if he is provided with plenty of balls and blocks he will never think of less interesting adult belongings. And lastly if he should manage to reach ornaments and try to break them, then it will be time enough and the right time to teach him not to. If we accept in practise what we proclaim in theory, that we are trying to help the baby to grow, not to get through his babyhood with as little trouble as possible, we shall welcome this opportunity of starting him on the road he must travel all his life. He can't long be kept free from temptation; it does harm rather than good to keep him free from any temptation at all comparable with his power to resist. If he tries to poke the cane through the looking-glass, he can generally be taught just as adults are taught that some things "aren't done," and if they are done, the penalty one has to pay outweighs the fun of doing them. Of course I don't mean that the mother must let him break the looking-glass and then save the money for a new one out of his toy allowance. That is more or less what will happen to him in after life, but as yet he wouldn't understand it. It will be enough like actual life if, every time he makes a threatening gesture with the cane, the mother takes it away

from him, saying: "No, no, mustn't break things with the cane." The process of giving it back for a fresh trial and taking it back at signs of backsliding will be somewhat wearisome for the mother while it is necessary, (which is not long), but most instructive for the child.

The stool, the cup, the stick, the bureau-drawer, the faucet, what are they but tools devised by human ingenuity; and the use of tools is one of the most important devices for training the young human animal to self-help. Being human he has a profound interest in tools, and is willing, for instance, to bend every energy to learn to use the lever, although he may not know its name for a dozen years. Is he trying to extricate from his sand-pile a buried stone? Don't pull it out with one jerk. Give him a stick, show him how to thrust one end under the stone and put his weight on the other end. You will find him a week later using the principle to force open a door that is difficult to open. Does the baby-girl find her doll-carriage will not go over the threshold? Don't lift it for her. Show her how to bear down on the handle so that the front wheels will be off the ground, and then how to lift and push at the same time. If you have not had experience with the innate tool-using capacity of the human race, you will be astonished to see how quickly she grasps the principle of physics involved, and how she will pro-

ceed to put it into execution with obstacles encountered thereafter.

And, of course, there is a greater principle involved than any law of physics. Back of all this stooping to observe minutely what are the capacities of a little child, back of all this ingenuity in devising ways for the two- and three-year-olds to make use of the ordinary apparatus of a home, lies the faith in habit, that great master of human life. No child is naturally passive. If we can avoid forcing him into passivity in early childhood, we need have no fears as to his capacity later to look out for himself. A little boy who at two does not ask to be lifted up on a sofa, but goes and gets a little stool to climb up and down, has set his feet on the path which leads surely and certainly to self-reliance. The three-year-old girl who can open and shut doors for herself, can put on and off her own wraps, and can get a clean dress out of her own bureau drawer, will not at seven ask her teacher to put her rubbers on for her. The little child who has discovered the delightful extension of his strength which comes from the use of a lever, will, when the time comes, seize eagerly on the use of a hammer and saw and plane; and that means he will make things for himself, instead of asking somebody to buy them for him.

Any human being, young or old, who has once

tasted the pleasure of competent activity, will never lack the instinct to do for himself. *There is no surer beginning for the habit of self-help than the consistent training of the capacity for it.* What people know how to do well, they like to do.

CHAPTER III

AFTER BABYHOOD AND BEFORE SCHOOL AGE

AS the child gets older he rapidly emerges from the inimitable concentration on himself alone which marks the baby, and comes into a dawning realization that there are other people in the world, even in his world, and that he has certain relations to them. This period of clear, new-minted, vivid impressions of family life is a very important one (what period is not?) and a child's later impulses about helping himself or getting other people to do his work for him, are largely colored by his unerringly accurate observation at this time as to the habits in this respect of his father and mother, and older brothers and sisters. He is almost as helplessly imitative now at four and five, as he was at two and three; and if he is surrounded by an atmosphere of well-directed energy he will soon be dipping his little oar into the current and paddling with the rest.

He knows only what he sees with his eyes, but he misses little of what goes on before his eyes under the roof that shelters him. If the roof chances to be that of an apartment hotel in which food is se-

cured by getting an elevator boy to take the family down-stairs to a dining-room where somebody puts a meal on the table; where the rooms are cleaned by some one summoned by an electric button; and if the child's mother uses her considerable leisure in buying ready-made articles of one sort and another, his parents should not be surprised to have the little fellow expect to put a nickel in the slot and draw forth the moon. It is as foolish to hope to be able to develop in a child habits of self-reliance, initiative and industry in surroundings where none of those qualities is ever visible to his eye, as to hope to develop a highly trained ear for music in a child who never hears a musical note from one year's end to another. It can't be done. Of course all my sensible readers are saying to themselves: "Oh, what an exaggerated example! No sane person would try to bring up children in an apartment hotel save as a desperate last resort. Only the most minute proportion of American families live in such conditions. Most of us, even most flat-dwellers cook, sweep and wash dishes just as in the old days."

Let these sensible readers reserve their protest until they have cast an honestly examining eye upon their own well-run comfortable homes. Not a few will see that the unformulated ideal which they are unconsciously trying to approach is that of a private apartment hotel, where all the real processes of life

are decorously hidden under a smooth appearance of automatic action. They will see that they are trying to conceal the fact that it takes work to keep a house going, just as, in the days of old-fashioned plumbing, they tried to conceal the fact that it takes pipes to get water into a sink, by means of a smoothly finished wooden under-the-sink closet, whose exterior was varnished and whose interior was cockroaches. The avowed aim of every good housekeeper is to run her house with no show of the effort it costs her, so smoothly that the machinery is both inaudible and invisible. This produces an effect very agreeable to adults whose real life is lived elsewhere. But let her beware lest her smooth appearance deceive the children as to the real nature of the case. It makes little difference to a five-year-old if he lives in an apartment hotel or a private house, if his bed is always made and his meals always prepared and his room always kept in order by either a competent mama or a well-trained servant. If he never has to give such matters any more thought than when he was two years old, the effect is the same on him. His nascent ability to reason from cause to effect will find little to feed on in his daily life if all the consequences of his acts are noiselessly and competently shouldered by other people.

And even—to go a peg lower in the financial scale —the mother who is in the proud position (she should be proud of it) of "doing her own work" (pregnant and significant phrase!) furnishes her little child with no better background than the apartment hotel, or the much-servanted home, if she goes on caring for her growing children as though they were babies. If her six- and seven-year-old boy is always sent out to play while she "does the work" and then is called in to a meal miraculously flowering out of the table, she is not helping him to any more realizing sense of the great fact that processes do not do themselves. On his grasp of that fact depends the sturdiness of his later mental and moral attitude toward life. If during those formative years of first impressions, the virgin whiteness of his unthinking, baby acceptance of everything can be covered over and over with reiterated engravings of the maxim that somebody must do everything that is done, he will be headed straight toward an honest acceptance of his share in that never-ending process. But, as a little child's knowledge is strictly limited to his own experience, it is practically impossible to make him believe that maxim unless he sees it in operation about him, unless he sees those he loves and respects openly doing their share of the world's work. He is old enough

by this time, if his parents have made a companion of him, to understand a simple explanation of the plan and organization of the home. But in kindness to his mother let me warn her against undertaking this explanation until she has it crystal-clear in her own mind, because she may encounter unexpected difficulties. Suppose an explanation running along this line: "You see, Jackie, dear, there's a certain amount of work to be done to keep the home running and comfortable for all of us. Father works all day to make the money to buy what we need, but just that wouldn't make it a real home. Mother, of course, does the most of the work, because she's the strongest and the oldest, and before you children came, she did it all. But each child makes more work; he sleeps in a bed, and has to have drawers to keep his clean clothes in; and a corner to play in, and he has to have food to eat, and dishes to eat it on. Now, when the child is a little weak baby, mother has to do all her work and all the extra work the baby makes too. But as he gets older he begins to do his own share and to even up for the extra work he makes. Big sister is getting our breakfasts for us now, as well as keeping her own room in order; and big brother sweeps the floor and keeps the bathroom clean. You're too little to do that much; but you can make your own bed every morning, and

keep your two bureau drawers in order, just as little sister is too little to make her crib, but she can put her playthings neatly back in the box."

Fortunate the woman whose life is cast along such simple and unassailable lines that she can issue such a plain and understandable statement of the foundations of home life! She has nothing to fear from the proverbially eagle eye of childhood, alert to pounce on fraud and pretense. She is not only fortunate, but seldom to be found. Most of us trip our heels over some such unexpected question as that quoted to me the other day by a laughing but discomfited young matron who had attempted to persuade her little girl to dust the parlor. "I don't want the child to grow up absolutely idle, you know, and I couldn't think of anything else for her to do," she explained to me. The little girl demurred: "No, mother, I don't want to! *You make Bridget do your work; why shouldn't she do mine?*" My friend was startled by this view of the matter. "I tried to explain to Polly," she said, "that I hired Bridget to do all the heavy common work, so that I could have time to—and then, do you know, I couldn't go on! Polly knows so well what I do do, and where I go, that there's no use putting up any bluff about how my time is spent. And she's altogether too keen a little thing to flim-flam into think-

ing that playing afternoon bridge or shopping without buying anything, is any more useful a way to spend an afternoon than washing our own dishes."

"Well, are you going to dismiss Bridget?" I asked as she paused.

"No, I'm not," she said. "Why should I turn away a faithful servant?"

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Well, I hesitated between giving some time as public playground supervisor, or being a Girl Scout leader," she said, with a humorous face of resignation, "and I've settled on the Girl Scouts. I'll start an organization among the girls of our neighborhood, and have Polly in it. Then I can explain to her that I hire Bridget to do the useful things she can do as well as I, so that I'll have time to do the useful things Bridget couldn't do." She pulled her veil down, took up her parasol and prepared to leave. "Talk about the difficulties of getting by St. Peter at the gates of Heaven!" she said over her shoulder; "they're nothing to the difficulties of accounting for yourself to your own child!"

It is probable that many another honest mother will encounter a certain difficulty if she tries to explain clearly to a child the duty of every person to do his share of the world's work. It is even possible that no better result could be hoped for than that maternity should in this instance, as it

does in so many others, educate her, so that she can educate her children; and that beginning by trying to make her children realize their small responsibilities, she should end by a clearer sight of her own greater ones. She can thus go forward hand in hand with them through the day's well-balanced program of work and study and fun.

If it seems hard on the tot of five to have him begin to do some of the work of the household, let it be remembered that children, even little children, are much like the rest of us and infinitely prefer to have some regular definite task, reasonably related to their own life, than to be pounced upon spasmodically at any hour which suits an adult, to "run errands" or to do single, detached, unrelated bits of drudgery whenever it occurs to an adult that they should be done. It is easier for a child to set his will to the accomplishing of a fair amount of work suitable for him, which is required of him as a matter of course, than to be at the beck and call of every adult who wants spectacles fetched. A child likes to feel, as we all like to feel, that when he has done his day's work, his time is, for the most part, his own; and a corollary of his regular tasks should be that he is not thereafter held responsible for other service. Of course this should not be too rigidly carried out, and like all other members of the family, he should expect to take his share of any un-

planned-for work which circumstances make necessary. But as a general thing his little dignity should be respected.

Furthermore there is no better practise for him than the elementary experience in planning his time which comes when he has certain regular set tasks to be somehow fitted into his day's activities. If they are talked over and decided upon in a leisurely, friendly discussion with his parents, and if he sees others of the family taking as a matter of course their share of what is to be done, he is an abnormal child of five who does not painlessly and all but unconsciously settle upon his little shoulders that goodly yoke of the habit of work, which will enable him to bear the burden of his adult life. There is a dignity and a consistency about his young life under such circumstances which he is not slow to feel.

The tasks should be very light at first, quickly accomplished, and so closely related to the child's own life that he sees the justice of the demand made on him. To ask him to dust a living-room, littered with objects which have no "beauty" to his eyes, is a hardship. The request that he make his own bed, just as other people make theirs, has a logical sequence to his mind. To explain to him that he is asked to keep the porch clean and in order because he plays there so much is to appeal to the always-present instinct for fair play.

With this to begin on, as he grows older and his mental capacity increases, he can grasp the more social idea of lumping together all the work of the home, and dividing it according to individual ability, rather than allotting to each one the task which most obviously touches his own life; he can understand that when he keeps the stairs and hall clean it is not because he alone gets them dirty, but because he is "trading works" (in the rural phrase) with his mother. He can not cook the food he eats, so he makes up for his share of that by doing part of something else that his mother would have to do, if he did not. And there is perhaps no better way to soften the detestable grabbing spirit of greed which is apt to descend upon even a child of generous instincts on his birthdays, than by adding to the other presents showered upon the child, a tribute to his greater age, strength and understanding in the shape of a more difficult and hence more interesting share of the household activities. "Now you're six, Margaret; you're big enough to be graduated from just putting away the silver when the dishes are washed. We'll leave that to little Peter, and you can dry the plates and cups and saucers."

If the accession of greater maturity is marked not only by a passive acceptance of a great many gifts, but by a definite acknowledgment of the use to which maturity is put, birthdays might not leave

such a bad taste of satiety in the child's mouth, on the day after.

Now, as to the question of earning money, a question not enough thought about in easy-going American families. The little child's desires are so small, so easily satisfied compared to those of his elders, that the temptation to gratify them is almost irresistible. The father sees on the shop counter a doll his little girl coveted—only twenty-five cents—what he would spend for a magazine to read on the train. Into his pocket goes the doll, and into his little girl's mind goes the conception that dolls can be made to grow in papa's pocket by the simple expedient of mentioning one's desire. Now this is not a very good seed to sow in the mind of a little American girl! There are only too many circumstances in most American feminine lives which will help it to grow into that half-conscious parasitism which is by no means unknown even among quite modern young women.

But the little girl must have dolls. Yes, and her father must not be deprived of the joy of giving them to her. But perhaps he can restrict that joy to special occasions, birthdays, Fourth of July, Christmas and the like. Perhaps for every-day routing he might be willing to adopt the plan of opening to his little six-year-old, beyond the few simple daily tasks allotted to her, several money-making possi-

bilities. If, in addition to keeping her own bureau in order and sewing on her own buttons, she fix up the bathroom neatly, she will have earned five cents. Washing three windows is worth a nickel, too, and taking all the care of small brother for half an hour; or polishing a dozen knives and a dozen forks; or filling the flower-vases with fresh flowers for two days; or weeding one row of the onion-bed; or feeding the chickens for three days. These financial possibilities vary according to circumstances and the ability of the child; but something of the sort can be provided in almost any home. And they are the resource for the child who wants a new toy. If he wants it enough to work three or four days to get it, he can have it. If not, he can go without. He has only himself to "tease" in the matter. He is perfectly free to choose. And there is still opportunity on festal days, for the father to buy those bigger things which would take too many days of six-year-old work to achieve, the Irish Mail, the tricycle, the big baby doll.

The conditions described here fairly approximate the conditions of actual life. All of us are obliged to work to some extent to keep from starving. That work corresponds to the child's regular daily tasks. Beyond that bare minimum we choose of our own free will how much more we think is worth working for. Some of us prefer to work very hard and have

a great deal; others prefer to work less, and take more leisure to enjoy what we have. And in his limited way the child experiences the same necessity to choose. Even at six he is not too small to begin to have a glimmering of the idea which adult life will bring home to him, that what he has is proportioned to the energy and purposefulness of his own life.

CHAPTER IV

CHILDHOOD UNDER APARTMENT-HOTEL CONDITIONS

LET no one think that the author's opinion is that the only way to be useful is to do housework. Housework is coming to be of less importance as the modern world is organized. But it is a very simple and natural and obvious way of being useful, the meaning of which is apparent to the eyes of any child. The preceding chapter was written to remind those still living under the old traditional home conditions how comparatively easy for them is the problem of training children to self-help. It was intended also as a warning to those endeavoring, as all true Americans do endeavor, to scramble out from those primitive conditions into what we fallaciously call, "easier circumstances." Do not repine if that transition to a more complicated way of life is put off until after the children are no longer little; for it takes an immense expenditure of thought and ingenuity and effort to find in the new life, anything at all comparable to the old as a school for children.

However, there are women, an increasing number

of them, for whom it would be folly to try to fit their lives into the old-fashioned home, mothers who would be as short-sighted to spend their lives in washing dishes, as their husbands would be to spend their lives in digging ditches. There is hope for them. As a rule, a woman intelligent enough to be notably more useful at something else than at housework at home, is intelligent enough to cope with the situation for her children. This, however, is only true *if she uses her intelligence for this purpose,* and too few of them realize that the problem is difficult enough to demand as much intelligence and ingenuity as any one woman can possibly muster. She can not solve it by earning money for her children. She must not turn her back on it, and let it take care of itself. If she contents herself with sending her five- and six-year-olds off to play all day in the park with a nurse, and offers to their dawning strength of personality no better food than the harem-like irresponsibility of what is known as a "well-run nursery" it is very doubtful if she is really being of more use to the world than if she were doing housework and keeping her children near her. If she is alert enough, and quick-witted enough, adequately to devise expedients to meet the new conditions, she is justified in going on with her modern life of independent effort away from the home; but let her not deceive herself as to the harm done by

allowing children no longer babies to continue in the dependent position of babies, and to lead the lives, proverbially ending in moral dry rot, of idle boarders in a house, for the conduct of which they feel no responsibility. Responsibility—there is the magic key to the door we are all trying to open to our children. Every one of experience has marveled at the transformation of a girl universally considered idle and irresponsible and languid, into an energetic forceful housewife, after she marries and takes charge of her own home. Many times, alas, the opportunity comes too late,—she has acquired too thoroughly the dawdling habits of badly-trained childishness ever to shake them off entirely. But that so many such girls are thus transformed is proof of the vitality of the instinct for self-mastery on which we may count in children. It is no less true of the other sex. Is there a family which has not seen with astonishment a slack, lounging, apparently invincibly lazy college boy, develop into a keen masterful man, when the responsibility for his own life is laid upon him? Such a miracle always takes place, in any human being of any age with the bestowal of the sacred, the divine gift of responsibility.

Now home work, sharing in the processes of a simple home, is not the only means whereby that golden gift of responsibility may be laid in the hands

of little children. There is nothing sacred about making beds or setting breakfast-tables; but it must be admitted that it is very hard to find activities which as plainly and directly speak to the mind of a little child. The modern mother of the modern home must be quick-witted and ingenious indeed, if she finds means as good for the moral health of her little folk. Her best resource is a good school or kindergarten, run on modern lines which permits the children to feel partial responsibility for the conduct of the institution. And there are few cases in which she can have such a school for her children, without actively cooperating in establishing and carrying it on. The machinery is not by any means completed and oiled which permits the modern mother to step out of the home as matter-of-factly as does the modern father. It is part of her labor to help manufacture that machine and to smooth the way for later mothers who wish to follow in her footsteps. If she does not realize this, she is lamentably failing in her duty. If she does not intend to train her children herself, she need not expect to have the work competently carried on by any other woman not a specialist in child-training. She need not expect that she will ever be able to hire a nursemaid capable of grasping the faintest conception of teaching children self-reliance. If she ever does encounter one, she may be sure that the supposed serv-

ant is an investigating sociologist in disguise. Nor can the nurse teach them much even if she knows how to. Her very presence makes difficult any appeal for cooperation by the children in the activity of all the family. It is apparent to the brute simplicity of their small minds that she is hired to take care of them. "Let her do it then!"

But the teacher in a well-run nursery school or kindergarten has (or may reasonably be expected to have) the intelligence to care for the children's best interests, as the mother does not wish to take time to do. Let the mother at least do all in her power to help the woman who is doing for her such a vital part of her work.

After she has roused the women of the neighborhood to a realization of the necessity for such a school, after she has organized it and put a competent woman at its head, the conscientious modern mother turns her attention to an analysis of whatever home life there is left at home, to see if there are not portions of it, for which the children might share the responsibility. First of all she will find that if she is ingenious, she can devise ways for making the children responsible for as much of the conduct of their own small lives as their development allows. Conditions vary so, that from here on, it is impossible to do more than give the sketchiest of suggestions, all of which have proved

practical in some cases, but which may or may not be available in others. The underlying principle will be apparent to any thoughtful reader. Each child of five or over can begin to be held responsible for the cleanliness of his own clothes, and can have his own individual laundry bag. He can be trained to remember (with an occasional reminder from mother or nurse) when to change his underwear and when to put his own soiled clothes in with the general family laundry: and when the clean clothes return, he can be held responsible for putting away his own garments in the space allotted to them. It is a fact that there are boys and girls old enough to go away to college, who are incapable of running this part of their lives, who, though studying algebra and Greek, are subconsciously convinced that clean and mended clothes grow of themselves in their bureau drawers. The too devoted mother or aunt or nurse who is responsible for this relic of babyishness is no benefactor of the race!

As to the matter of mending, that depends on the age of the child. Most five- and six-year-olds are capable of sewing on their own buttons and they are all capable of looking over a garment, deciding if it needs repairs, and taking it themselves to whomever in their homes is the mender of the family. The mere fact that their attention is called week after week to the axiom that clothes need

mending and that mending is not done without hands, is of invaluable service to the children's minds.

The answering of the telephone is in some cases a process of modern life in which children can share. During certain periods of the day (short ones, always) the child is responsible for telephone calls, talking with the person calling, if father and mother happen to be away, or if they happen to be at home, seeing that they are called promptly to the telephone. Answering the door-bell is another duty of which the children might well have an occasional experience, even if they make mistakes in their responses to the various sorts and conditions of callers. Both these exercises are helpful because they help to free the child from that detached passive attitude toward what goes on in his home, which is the surest beginning of the objectionable, detached and irresponsible attitude toward life in general.

The daily toilet, of course, being an entirely personal matter, should as soon and as completely as possible, be put in the hands of the person whom it concerns. Not only should the child of six expect as a matter of course to dress himself, brush his own teeth and wash his own face; but he should begin to decide (subject to veto by his mother) which of his clothes he should wear. It should be brought home by experience to the mind of the little

girl who loves to dress up, that if she wears her "best dress" day after day it is soon not fit to be seen, whereas her plain, durable every-day dresses stand the visit to the laundry and return better than ever. She should know about how many dresses she owns, and should herself make the calculation as to how often she can afford to put on a clean frock.

In several families of my acquaintance the question of going-to-bed has been made an opportunity for the inculcating of responsibility and self-reliance, instead of the occasion for recurrent, wrangling discussions. The bedtime of the different children is decided upon in family conclave (which includes, of course, the child in question) and then as part of his day's work the child is expected to get himself undressed and in bed at the hour set. For every week running that he does this, he is allowed some special coveted treat.

It would seem hardly necessary to add a suggestion that each child have a hook or two for his own wraps and a place for his own rubbers and umbrella, if there were not still existing so many American households where this elementary device for self-help is non-existent and where in response to the clamorous rainy-morning demand from the children, "Where are my rubbers?" the harassed mother calls out: "Look behind the door in the hall! Have you tried the back-porch? Maybe

they're in the closet under the stairs. Where *do* you suppose you left them *this time?*" The habit of hanging up one's own wraps can be acquired in very young childhood so that it is never lost; but it can not be acquired unless the essential condition is provided, a never-varying place to put them that is never encroached upon by adults.

The question of how to keep in order the overwhelming avalanche of toys in the playroom can be best answered by reducing the proportions of the avalanche. If the playthings are well selected, with the aim of promoting (to use President Elliot's famous phrase) the permanent satisfactions of life, there need not be so many of them. A blackboard is available for a hundred uses and by its mere blank presence in a children's room stimulates inventiveness and fires the imagination. Not so a mechanical dog that turns somersaults. After the first few days of wonder, the interest in him vanishes, and he remains in the nursery only as one of the meaningless jumble which makes too exacting the demand that the children keep their room in reasonable order. Nobody can keep a junk-heap in order, and it is self-defeating tyranny to ask children to. But here again, as in every step taken to benefit them they should share, as soon as possible, in the reasoning which leads to the rule and in the responsibility for seeing it executed. They and not their

mother should decide which of their toys are junk; but they should be held to the decision. If they care enough about any given plaything to keep it in its place when they are not using it, they should be allowed to retain it in the playroom. When it is no longer of value enough to care for properly, they should consign it either to other children not so burdened with toys, or to a big box where the reserve playthings are kept. Often after a rest of some weeks, a once-despised toy accumulates fresh charms, has new possibilities and is taken out and played with again, serving the purpose quite as well as a new one. And beyond this substantial consideration, the benefit to the child is indisputable. He has begun what should be one of the most fundamental and vital processes of his life, the process of choosing those elements which are worth retaining, and of clearing his horizon of those which are not. If the necessity to make this choice consciously and intelligently is repeatedly forced upon a little child, he will not grow up to be a helpless victim of modern complication, whose energy is dissipated by a helpless response to a thousand diverse demands. For a five-year-old, to clear out his playroom of junk which is not longer of use or profit to him, is a process comparable to that by which a woman of intelligence and conscience decides that she will eliminate the distracting folly of formal "society"

life, a decision which needs all the courage and self-confidence that can be developed only during a life in which self-reliance has been a determining factor.

Another side of the child's life which would profit by a larger infusion of self-reliance, is the question of his relation to the weather. The little baby is put into this or that wrap like a doll, and in too many cases the big girl of seven is treated in the same way. Any child old enough to read numbers should be taught to consult the thermometer regularly every morning just as any sensible and enlightened adult does, and should learn to gauge the necessity for wraps according to the verdict of that invaluable instrument. The relation of wraps to weather is a matter which ought to be talked over rationally and quietly between parent and child and then part of the responsibility for carrying out the plan should be left with the child. I quote from such a wrap-chart already existing, which would need to be varied according to climate and the age of the child.

Above 74: barefoot.
Above 60: no hat, no coat.
Between 45 and 60: light coat, cap.
Between 30 and 45: heavy coat, cap, mittens.
Below 30: heavy coat, leggings, fur-cap, mittens.
On rainy days wear rubbers, a rain-coat.

On threatening days carry rubbers in school-bag when leaving home, and either umbrella or raincoat.

The mere presence of such a chart, prepared in common with his parents and authorized by himself, brings to the top those law-abiding instincts of regularity which exist in every human being, and which run instinctively counter to the apparently baseless, whimsical adult command, "Now, Willie, you put on your heavy coat to-day!"

Beyond the excellent habit of looking at the thermometer in the morning as regularly as he brushes his teeth the child acquires the far more important habit of himself assuming some of the responsibility for being adequately clothed for existing weather conditions, a responsibility which often comes as a surprising shock to young people legally of age.

As the children in the apartment hotel grow older, there come into their lives other factors which may be, but not often are, used to develop self-reliance and responsibility. Such modern families are apt to travel about a good deal, and this is an excellent opportunity to lead the children out of babyish dependence into a competent ability to handle a number of modern institutions. Instead of playing with a toy or reading a story-book while his father looks up routes, and figures on connections,

and decides on trains, let the ten-year-old look over the paternal shoulder and see how the thing is done. Teach the twelve-year-old girl how to use a railroad time-table, so that she may not grow into the woman so frequently encountered, who leans spinelessly on the Bureau of Information or a chance and none-too-courteous brakeman, for information about her journey that is all contained in the railroad folder in her lap. Let the fourteen-year-olds (subject, of course, to their parents' advice and veto) plan all the family trips, determine the routes and estimate beforehand the amount of money that will be needed, and, as soon as possible, let them handle some of the actual details of the transaction. I do not mean that one is to go with one's bewildered and confused ten-year-old son to the baggage window of a great station in a rush hour, and insist that the boy check the family trunks. Under those conditions, all the child can do is to watch what his parent does, and this is a privilege seldom vouchsafed to traveling children, who are usually told to "sit right there with Aunt Margaret till father comes back from checking the trunks," and who often grow up in abysmal ignorance of what that process is. Then keep an eye open for better opportunities. At a small station, with a few travelers, if the baggage master looks good-natured and unhurried, enlist his help in the matter, and let the twelve-

year-old, laboriously and intensely responsible, actually perform the operation of buying his own ticket, seeing that the change is correct and checking his own satchel or trunk. It will seem a great event to him; his self-confidence will be vastly augmented by seeing that he really can do it himself, and it will mean the first step into the capacity for clear-headed, unconfused finding his way about the modern world.

Another process in modern life that is usually learned by young people with awkward, misdirected and miserably self-conscious efforts, is the ordering of a meal in a hotel or restaurant. This is something else that apartment-hotel children might very well learn how to do adequately instead of fumbling their way into doing it glibly but ill. Whenever a child is taken to a public eating-place his attention should be called to its customs. He should learn the difference between a meal à la carte, and those at a fixed price; he should have some guidance and experience in picking his path through the jungle of expensive and indigestible food offered; he should learn what sort of meals best suit his own stomach and his father's purse. He is not too young at ten or twelve to be set the task of ordering a sensible meal which will satisfy him and not be extravagant, and at that age he is still pliant enough to yield to parental objections to those dinners made up of lobster salad and ice-cream which make the

delight of adolescents having their first experience with "boughten meals." He should have frequently enough to outgrow his embarrassment, the experience of speaking for himself, ordering his own food, asking for the bill, verifying the items and paying for the total. He might even as well be initiated into a process fraught with uneasiness to most Americans, and learn about what proportion of the bill should be given as a tip to the waiter, and have the courage of his convictions in bestowing it. A child who has several times gone through all this process under the friendly eye of his father or mother with his family to fall back on in case of mistake, is in one more particular being prepared to be a competent self-reliant citizen of the modern world as it is.

CHAPTER V

RAW MATERIAL

WHAT do we mean, exactly, when we say, as we do so many, many times, that we want to train our children to self-help? Probably each of us attaches a different meaning to the phrase. One mother may have an idea that she wants her girls to possess some definite, money-earning capacity so that marriage will not be their only means of support; another may feel that she wants them to be able to keep house thoroughly and well. Another may have a vague notion of their developing the mental independence to make up their own minds on religious and political matters, and a mother of yet another intellectual level would be satisfied if they could manage a good appearance under all conditions. Fathers vary as greatly, from desiring a political success for their sons, to wishing them to become prosperous dairy-farmers. And yet every one of these varying interpretations of "self-help" has at least two elements in common with all the others: the first is the fact (not without pathos from the parental point of view) that in all probability the adult life chosen by the son or daughter will

bear no relation whatever to the parent's dreams about it; and second, the fact that all these dreams, divergent as they seem, are really made of identical stuff. What we all desire is that our children as they come to take up their independent lives, shall be moved by long-established mental habit to an alert, purposeful, positive and resourceful attitude toward their new problems. If they possess this they will succeed in any life they choose, whether it is our choice or not. What we all fervently pray may not come to pass, is that they shall submit themselves passively to conditions, accept the first defeats as final, become the serfs instead of the masters of life.

Now either of these mental habits of initiative or of inert passivity, is extremely pervasive and tinges all of the consciousness of the individual. To attain our goal of the good habit established, we must try steadily throughout the child's earlier life, to steep him in an atmosphere colored throughout with energetic purposeful action. It is not enough to insist upon a few tasks performed. Nothing is enough which depends upon our presence, upon the presence of any adult. The influence at work must be ever-present; the child must be surrounded not by commands and exhortations to do things for himself, but by irresistible *temptations* to do things for himself, temptations which even the naturally

slothful or sluggish can not resist. There is no better ally in this campaign than raw materials, and no more insidious foe than the cheap and easily secured finished products of our modern industrial civilization.

The presence of raw material stimulates the creative instinct, the noblest and most fertile of all human impulses, and the presence of finished products stimulates the ignoble instinct for personal possession, one of the most futile of human instincts. When the grown-up child faces his own life, he faces literally or figuratively a mass of raw material which nobody in the world but he himself can shape into symmetry and strength. A whole lifetime of the habit of forcing raw material to obey his will is none too good a preparation for that enterprise. And he is fatally betrayed if he has been allowed to acquire the modern conviction that somebody else is the one to transform raw material into desirable commodities which he will then buy with cash, and own as inactive possessions. If the parent with this clue in his mind will look at the very most modern and advanced schools, he will see that they are all trying to substitute raw material and the impulse to master it, to a passive possession of finished products. And turning to his own home with that clue in his mind he may see a path out of many a domestic difficulty, and understand very much more thor-

oughly the need for adjuncts to the home which had seemed before in the nature of frills and fads. The carpenter's bench for his boys may seem to him not a bulky and rather expensive toy, but a step along the path which will lead them to professional success when the time comes for them to construct a tight-jointed legal argument with the habit of persistent effort induced by constructing a tight-jointed box. The mother may with more resignation allow modeling clay to spread its messy smears over a table in the nursery, if she reasons that the modeling and baking and decorating of a clumsily-shaped doll's tea-set, may be a rung in the ladder upon which her little daughter may mount to the blessed habit of cheerful effort to obtain her desires; whereas the boughten tea-set would set another stone in the wall which tends to shut her into the dreary lifeless habit of asking or teasing, or begging somebody else to drop her desires, ready-made, into her idle hands.

Of course one bait will not do for all fish, and the parent who goes angling in his children's natures for the instinct to self-help must have as large and varied a set of resources as the most completely equipped fly-fisherman. What will tempt a young child to creating something for himself will leave an older one untouched; and what will move one temperament to effort will mean nothing to another.

Carpenters' tools are excellent things, but one would not go far in offering them to a little girl with a passion for dolls. The thing for her is plenty of cotton-batting or bran, patterns to cut out dolls of various sizes, white cotton cloth to make them of, paints or crayons to color the faces, hanks of darning cotton to make hair of, and then a compendious rag-bag with suggestively varied stuffs to clothe the ensuing family of dolls, which is apt to be excessively numerous. A doll-loving little girl who is thus provided with the means to equip herself with all the family her maternal heart desires, big and little, babies and aunties, and grandmas and hired men, will spend little time sighing for the expensive, elaborately dressed bisque doll on exhibition in the toy-shop—especially if she is not often taken to the toy-shop!

Although the question of shopping is taken up at length elsewhere in this book, a special phase of it needs mention in connection with the prominence given to raw materials. If one indulges one's self in the pernicious habit of "shopping" that consists in a covetous mouth-watering, heart-burning sojourn among objects too costly to buy, or in careless yielding to the temptation to buy, there are other reasons than the mere financial one for not habituating the children to the same baleful influences. For you can not expect them to retain their interest in raw

materials if their impressionable minds are stunned and stupefied by the vast numbers of finished products which it is the main business of a well-organized industrial society to produce. Children should spend as little of their precious youth as possible hankering after ready-made possessions, and as much time as possible creating for themselves the things they desire. What buying the children do should be from the first largely, almost exclusively, of objects which are to be *used* either to wear, to produce something, or as means to learn dexterity (games, sleds, roller-skates). As soon as they begin to be old enough to understand relative prices, they should begin to some extent to buy their own raw material, and for some suggestions on that process, the reader is referred to the chapter on "Shopping."

To give an exhaustive list of the raw materials that children might use to advantage would be to give a list as long and comprehensive as the tariff schedules. But this does not mean that they should all be heaped on the playroom shelves at one time. It means that day by day, as the children develop needs and wishes, they should be furnished the raw materials to satisfy them. There is a remark very familiar to parental ears, "Oh, I wish we had a play-house!"—or a toboggan slide, or a basket-ball outfit, or a shelf in the porch, or what not—and the

wise parent makes answer to this, "Well, let's see if we can't make one."

Such a suggestion, of course, will bring few results unless the children have the habit of self-help, and unless both tools and raw materials for the work are at hand. Parents must always bear in mind that the less skilful the workman, the better must be his outfit; and they must not be discouraged if their children fail to conquer difficulties for them overmastering. An old story (it is told about a number of eminent violinists) bears on this point. During the maestro's absence a joker among his pupils hid his cherished Stradivarius and put in its place an old battered fiddle. The maestro returned, and, without showing that he had noticed the substitution, held the class spellbound with the glorious tones he drew from the dilapidated old instrument. My point is that none of his pupils could have done the like: it was all they could do to produce even passable tone from a good violin: with a poor one their squeaking would have been agonizing. So with the children's occupations. Remember that for untrained fingers it is difficult to make a shipshape job even under the best of conditions. If the children are cutting paper or cloth, try to have a *sharp* pair of shears to lend them. If they are making paper houses, buy them some fresh manila paper—

it is cheap. Don't ask them to get along with flimsy newspaper or with wrapping paper already used and crumpled.

If you give the boys a set of tools don't select them from a "marked-down" counter of a department store. A hammer, a square, a two-foot rule, a saw (two saws—a rip-saw and a hand-saw are better), a plane and a chisel, all made of good material, would be better than an elaborate but poorly made set. Other tools will be handy, but they can be bought later if the boy's interest warrants it. Such a set of tools need not cost so much as is sometimes paid for it. Small dealers often ask the full manufacturer's list price for tools, but large hardware firms and the mail-order houses sell far below the list, and still make a profit. Tools, however, are not enough. The boy must have some place to work. If there is no room that can be spared for a shop, let him use some other room during certain hours. A large rug of canvas, denim or some other smooth strong material can be laid down to catch the sawdust and shavings and help to make easier the cleaning up afterward. It is only fair, of course, that all litter should be removed by those who make it, nevertheless we parents must not forget that we want the children to play, and we must try to make the tonic and necessary putting things

to rights after the play hour easy enough so that anticipation of it does not hold the children back from the pure pleasure of the play itself.

Another adjunct necessary to make a set of tools of service is some sort of bench. This may be bought ready-made, or if nails can be driven and the bench left permanently in one place, it can be built much more cheaply by a carpenter. The essentials are: that it shall be of a suitable height (about as high above the ground as the user's hip-joint is the rough-and-ready formula); that it shall be furnished with a vise and perhaps with a bench stop, for since the tools will be held with uncertain fingers, the wood must be held very firmly.

Besides tools, a room to work with and a bench to work on, a carpenter needs materials to work with, and it is here that parents are often lacking in foresight. They say sadly, "Yes, Willie has an expensive set of tools, but he doesn't seem to care to use them," when often Willie has never had anything to try his tools on except old box-boards (which do well enough for rough construction, but which, knotty and cross-grained as they are, can not be made to take a smooth finish) and nothing to fasten his work except heavy nails or tacks. Give Willie a few boards of pine or whitewood or chestnut anywhere from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in thickness and two or three pounds of wire

nails in assorted sizes (such packages are on the market; both nails and screws can be had in assorted sizes from the large mail-order houses and probably from some hardware stores) and the chances are that he will take a sudden and surprising interest in his tools.

Lastly, remember that tools grow dull quickly (planes and chisels are usually dull when bought) and that sharpening them is more difficult than using them. You are hardly giving your boy a fair chance unless you have him taught to sharpen all his tools, and while he is learning (it will take him a long time before he can file a saw) see to it that some older workman keeps the boy's tools in workable condition.

As I have said so many times, don't be discouraged if your scheme falls through—try another! It may be that Willie after all your efforts will make little use of his tools. Perhaps he has no mechanical gift; but perhaps he is merely not interested in woodwork. Don't give up on handwork until you have tried some other branches. Consult the list of handbooks which is given at the end of the *Boy Scout's Manual* and with its help try to think of other things that Willie may be interested in.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add the caution that the rule that children should themselves construct the

things they desire, needs to be applied, like all other rules, with the assistance of common sense. It would be an impossibly difficult undertaking for an eight-year-old to construct his own flexible flier, and yet the well-developed boy of fourteen who has acquired the taste for using tools, prizes a sled of his own making much more than a ready-made one. A tent is an indispensable adjunct to the proper bringing-up of boys, but whether or not it needs to be bought outright depends on the age of the boys. If a good book of instruction be procured (any reference librarian can give you four or five such books about outdoor life) most boys immensely enjoy studying out the patterns for different styles of tents; cutting and sewing on their own, and applying the water-proofing themselves. This is a long, messy and untidy job, before which any neat housekeeper justifiably quails; but the neatest of housekeepers with brains and the capacity for observation must admit that the absorbed interest and patient application of the boys is a sight even more agreeable than an immaculately orderly room. And they could have no more valuable experience than to have converted a flat bale of canvas into a serviceable shelter from the rain. Every such successful mastery of raw material, means more well-founded courage and self-confidence in the shaping of life itself.

Take another instance to illustrate how wide is the range of "raw materials" to be brought into play. A family of boys, fascinated by soldiers, as is still often the case with little boys who know nothing of what war is, and presented with a set of toy-soldiers, were led away from blood-thirsty reproductions of actual battles by the construction in the back yard of a large and complete permanent camp for their army, with rows of circular tents of muslin, with home-manufactured cooking-centers, with proper drainage insured, with sufficient water-supply, with the right kind of accommodation for horses and mules—an elaborate enterprise which lasted for several days, which was accompanied by much studying of all available information about the best modern camps, and which left the boys with a considerable notion of the principles of hygienically caring for a large body of men; and more to the point in the matter of self-help, with another accretion added to their trained habit of finding their enjoyment in activity and accomplishment.

Just as this "temptation" to creation should be in the parent's mind, when he considers every home enterprise of the children, so he should remember it in every purchase. In buying paper-doll sets, do not buy those already dressed: buy the variety which has patterns and a seductive array of crêpe-

paper fabrics and trimmings for the manufacture of toilets. Buy raffia and instruction for simple basketry rather than the pretty baskets themselves. Make a scrap-book of suggestions, read or heard, for things of home manufacture. Get a recipe for making papier-maché pulp out of newspapers and glue, and show the children how to decorate and gild photograph frames. If home-dramatics are imminent, and they should always be imminent in every well-run home, stage properties, costumes and wigs are famous incentives to activity and effort. Too few children know the joys and fascinations of the dye-pot, the miraculous way in which five-cent unbleached cheese-cloth can be transformed into rainbow-tinted draperies for home-fairies, in which corn-husks or raffia, or rags, or feathers are glorified into fabrics irresistibly tempting to handle and fashion. Have on hand as a matter of course, just as you have bread, a miscellaneous collection of the more familiar raw materials, tools, odd bits of board and pasteboard, dye, tissue-paper, glue, paste, scissors, modeling clay, tacks, gilding, water colors, paper of all kinds, crayons, sewing materials, etc., etc. All this formidable sounding list costs less to buy than one elaborately dressed doll, and outlasts her by many months.

And finally, since imaginative resourcefulness is one of the most important components of the ca-

pacity for self-reliance, give the child's imagination an occasional fillip by the presentation of some unusual material. "Here's an old straw hat of your father's. Do you children want to soak it and rip it apart and see if you can make anything with it?" "The people next door have moved away and left a great big packing box. How would you little folks like to drag it over here and see what you could play with it?"

It may end as a pirate's ship with a black flag, or a hospital ward filled with sick dolls, but in either case it has been a stepping-stone to that brisk, alert, self-confident and imaginative attitude toward life, which far more than moral exhortation, is the secret of self-reliance.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROBINSON CRUSOE INSTINCT

ABOUT two hundred years ago, a hard-driven literary hack, writing with desperate fluency on any topic that came to hand, hit upon a theme which has made his memory immortal; and in writing the story of a shipwrecked sailor wrote his own name forever upon the tablets of renown. That story is neither better nor worse written than much else of Defoe's voluminous production. Its instant and lasting success came from the fact that Defoe had chanced to write about a situation which rouses and always will rouse interest in every healthy human being, the situation of a man thrown wholly on his own resources and struggling more or less successfully to achieve his desires by means of his own strength and intelligence. Every one of us to some degree is a Robinson Crusoe, mustering all our forces to conquer circumstances, and this symbolism though not consciously realized by most readers, accounts for the extreme and sympathetic interest with which we all follow tales of desert islands and castaways.

Now, children are in many respects but adults who have not grown a thickened skin, who are more helplessly responsive to circumstance than they will be in later life, and who are more surely stimulated by suggestions from the outside. The Robinson Crusoe instinct is not far below the skin in any one, even a very busy, preoccupied adult. In a child it is almost always already present, already longing for exercise. And as it is one of the most definite manifestations of the capacity for self-reliance, it is one we can most surely depend upon for purposes of child-training. The most waited-upon and servant-spoiled child can be aroused to initiative by an artfully administered dose of desert-island, and for ordinary normal children the device is of never-failing usefulness and convenience.

Of course the most ingenious parent can not concoct a desert island in a city apartment, but leaving out of account that last resort for family life, there are few other conditions which can not be made to yield up some sort of Robinson Crusoe background. Even for the apartment-dwellers, innumerable ingenious and able minds have provided satisfactory substitutes. What, if not varied, appeals to one form or another of the Robinson Crusoe instinct, are the boys' and girls' summer camps, which flourish everywhere in the United States, the Boy-Scout movement, the teaching of woodcraft, the Camp-

fire Girls. But we need not wait until the children are old enough to go away to a summer camp: we need not have the money for one of those rather expensive institutions, nor need the Robinson Crusoe call to alert self-reliance and mastery of nature be restricted to four or six weeks in the year. Any child old enough to walk four miles (and any healthy child of six should be able to do this) is old enough to have frequent tastes of Robinson Crusoeing. A weekly or bi-weekly careful planning and preparation of outfit and food, a walk to suit the capacities of the youngest, an encampment of an hour or two, while the stronger legs go farther in exploration, a meal well-cooked outdoors, the camping-place left in good condition, the return with trophies for the home collection—this is a different program from the profitless, somnolent nodding over Sunday newspapers after a heavy dinner which represents a too common method of spending the precious hours together of a day of rest.

It is even very different from the children gathered at the mother's knee while she reads aloud an edifying book, which is the seldom-realized ideal of the generation which brought us up. But it is a program which fits modern American children almost invariably, and which easily, simply and naturally, brings them into contact with the bracing and tonic obstacles obligingly furnished by Nature and the

weather whenever those great teachers are sought out. The changing seasons furnish variety enough and, uninteresting though the region may seem at a superficial glance, there is not a square foot of our Mother Earth which will not furnish delight and profit to any sensitive growing nature, when acquaintance with it becomes intensive. For healthy children, if suitable clothing be provided, there is almost no weather that is unsuitable for such an expedition. (And suitable clothing for such circumstances is more essential than suitable clothing for dancing school, if one must choose!) In fact bad weather adds a keen edge of enjoyment to Robinson Crusoeing; and any child is to be pitied who has not helped in the defeating of a rain-storm, in the construction of a temporary shelter, in the defiant lighting of a fire, and in the successful preparation and comfortable consumption of savory food, secured in the face of the opposition of all the elements. The child does not live, who, properly equipped and led, would not enjoy such an experience; and he enjoys it because it arouses in him the sturdy determination to achieve his purpose which we call self-reliance, and which we rightly consider one of the most vital elements in the happiness and worth of human life.

To be sure, all this can be done, more formally with more definite organization by some of the

modern substitutes for parents—such as the Boy Scouts. But I do not see why the realization of the value of outdoor life as a means of arousing self-reliance should necessarily be another factor for the alienation of the child from his family. Why should it not be, instead, a new factor for the cementing together of the family? If outdoors is one of the best places for a child to learn valuable lessons, why should not his family follow him there, and strengthen the family tie by sharing with him the stimulating new experience? It will certainly do them no harm. And it is doubtful if an afternoon of bridge, or dancing, or swathed and passive progress in an automobile, or even of tea and conversation, is of any more value to them, to the child, to the world, than an afternoon of cross-country tramping, with a hasty but well-made encampment to the accompaniment of bacon broiled over the coals, and a camp-made flapjack or two.

From this rudimentary beginning of impromptu "family hikes" there will inevitably branch out many new interests and influences, all of them leading straight toward the habit of self-reliance, and garnering as they go, the goodly habit of comradeship between parent and child. Why wait until one can have money enough and the child is old enough to send away from home to a formally organized camp before calling in the Robinson Crusoe in-

stinct? Nowadays, with rapid transit everywhere installed, even city dwellers are but a short distance from the country, and for our purposes one kind of country is quite as good as another.

Any spot that has the sky overhead and the earth beneath is a happy hunting-ground where parents can successfully lead their children forth into the flight away from modern habits of passivity and possession, toward the age-old impulses to activity and endeavor. And there is no need for elaborate preparation. This very afternoon, armed with a loaf of bread and a pound of bacon, one can take the children by the hand and walk out of the twentieth century back into the Stone Age.

After the beginning, the children will see to it that the adventure develops properly. There will be a call for equipment, which can be made the occasion for successful wrestle with raw material. There will ensue a study of woodcraft books, a discussion of the various makes of knapsacks, an exhaustive investigation of balloon-silk tents, lore as to setting up brush shelters, the invaluable pages of the *Boy Scout Manual* will be thumbed thin by boys and girls alike with a zest heightened immeasurably by the fact that father and mother are interested too.

If the region has been mapped by the United States Geologic Survey, many evenings will be spent

poring over those invaluable and inexpensive sheets, tracing on them the route of the last tramp—"Yes, this must be where we left the road—just after the cross-road—you remember! Here is where we crossed the brook on stepping-stones. Up that hill through a birch wood to the cliffs! The cold spring must be about half-way up the next hill—better put a cross on the map; we can lunch there next week and then strike out into the hilly country to the north." Or if no such minutely accurate maps are available, the children can take the best map they can get, trace it on architect's paper (or on butter-paper, or on the thin glazed paper sold at five- and ten-cent stores for wrapping up luncheons) and see what they themselves can do toward filling in the details. This is a difficult task and the children will do well if they even approximate the truth. But the attempt will marvelously quicken their observation of nature, and keep up their interest week after week in exploring to the last ant-hill the same bit of country.

Then as the institution of the regular family "hike" continues there may grow up some permanent features. A good-natured farmer who would warn off a group of boys alone, may, because the parents are present, lease a half-acre of his land for the erection of a family camp on it—not an architect-planned and contractor-built camp—not even a carpenter-

built camp; but a family-built camp, constructed of odd materials that stimulate the ingenuity, and put together as a thrilling adventure into an unfamiliar effort. No matter if when it is finished it looks like the patched and shambling temporary cabin of a foreign ditch-digger, or still more probably like the crazy shelter put up of old tin roofing and fence-boards by a "gang" of boys, those sinister gathering-places of uncared-for adolescents, which are rightly regarded with such apprehension by parents and reformers. It may look like such a shelter, but it is in reality the surest guarantee against the baleful "gang" influence. A boy whose family have always been his "gang" needs and will seek no other.

Although it is mildly puzzling to adults that children should have a great affection for such a ramshackle construction of their own, and more interest and pride in putting up a rough shelf there than in keeping in order the pleasant rooms of the family home, the fact remains that they all do, that their ingenuity and imaginative resourcefulness are irresistibly stimulated to loving and potent effort by that cheerless interior. Children who are used at home to the debilitating attentions of a maid, who do not even button their own shoes, will labor with untiring joy over the construction of an outdoor fireplace, and preside proudly thereafter at the out-

door cooking of food. And normal children, with their capacity for self-help untarnished by bad influences, breathe the free air of such primitive experiences with never-failing delight.

Again from this rudimentary beginning of a family camp, the children, if left unhampered, will evolve innumerable lively variations on the theme, just as they evolved the camp from the bare Sunday afternoon walk. Ten to one, if the ground is at all workable they will dig a cave. The man who said that no adult ever amounted to anything who had not in childhood played in a hole-in-the-ground, exaggerated—but not much. They will have a complicated system of signals before approaching the cave, with an outlet for the smoke to puzzle their "enemies," and they will eat very smoky bacon cooked over that badly burning fire, and they will have stones in their shoes and sand in their hair and in their hearts a dawning confidence in the power of the human will, their own will, to enforce its desire upon brute matter.

If there is a tree at hand big enough, they will have a tree-dwelling and a rope-ladder, and a home-made canvas roof. And no matter what the surrounding country is, they will soon have a knowledge of it, and a command of its resources which will go far toward enabling them to rally themselves to a knowledge and command of any situa-

tion of later life. Every repetition of an exploration and mastery of new conditions, leads the child away from the babyish mental attitude toward the world, which is to run to the nearest approach to a mother present and hide his face in her skirt, and toward the fully grown mental attitude which is of intelligent curiosity and self-confidence. The aim of the wise parent is to free the child from his natural, cat-in-a-strange-garret apprehension of unknown disaster in new surroundings, and change this to a knowledge that general laws are universal, and that the same intelligence, courage and application, which he knows from experience will solve one set of problems, will go far toward solving any other problems that he will ever meet in the course of his life.

SOCIAL SELF-RELIANCE

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL SELF-RELIANCE

THE word "social" in this chapter heading and throughout the chapter is meant to convey the old-fashioned Victorian parlor and dinner-party significance which sounds narrow and archaic enough to our modern ears, used to hearing the word employed in its wider civic sense. Just as the word itself sounds a trifle out of date and narrow-minded, the life it denotes is one so out of favor with sober-minded people that a certain amount of courage is required for a twentieth-century author to treat it seriously enough to devote a chapter to it. I hasten to say at once, before the thoughtful reader turns away, that I do not at all advocate a dancing-school training in formal manners for our ordinary democratic American children, who are (we hope) to grow into earnest citizens of the Republic, too intent on important matters to be concerned with the exact width of a handkerchief hem or the exact fork to be used for eating game. On the other hand even a twentieth-century dweller, if he is not so young as to have had no experience of the real

world, must recognize that human lives, even very earnest human lives, are colored to a singularly large extent by what takes place in their hours of recreation; that helplessness and lack of resource and initiative in the matter of pleasant social intercourse are apt to be punished by a more or less complete isolation, and that isolation is not a condition favorable to normal human development or usefulness.

So with some misgivings about being misunderstood, and considered frivolous, the author of a book on self-reliance and responsibility includes a chapter on the social life of children. The very phrase is sure to meet with objections. Should children *have* any social life? Do they not, as a matter of fact, have altogether too much of it already? Would it not be better for parents to give all their energies to an attempt to stem the tide of ever-increasing "social life," which wears out our children to-day?

Once when I was a student in Germany, I was walking with some friends through a rural district on a clear, bright September afternoon. In a little village we stopped for a drink of water, and as we drank, we pricked up our young ears at the sound of music. It was the harvest dance, somebody told us, over there in that big building, a barn or storehouse of some sort. We made our way there and

saw one of the cheerfulest sights I ever beheld—an assemblage of farmers and their families, eating and drinking before the door, under the shade of the trees, while, inside, their young folks danced heartily and joyfully to the music of two fiddles and a flute. All the big doors and windows were open. The sweet country breeze sent its pure invigorating breath through that impromptu ballroom, and it was to the honest light of common day that those red-cheeked lads and lasses were whirling one another about. One of them, with a pleasant friendliness invited me to dance, and in a moment I was whirling with them. The experience made a profound impression on my mind. For many years I had "been going to dances," as the phrase runs, but never had I known that dancing could be so much fun. That was years before the dancing craze, and dances were always formal evening affairs, whereas about this festival there was an indescribable absence of the tension, the nervous excitement which I had always thought was an integral part of a ball, but which, as I danced then, in the late afternoon sunlight, I felt to be as burdensome as it was unnecessary. Why wait till late in the evening, one's usual bedtime, before beginning to dance? Why always precede the delight of rhythmic activity by a troublesome change to one's most elaborate dress and least comfortable foot-gear? Why, in

short, be so dependent upon the machinery of ceremonial for joy-in-common? The wide-spread furor for the dance resulting in light-hearted dancing any- and everywhere has proved that, at least as regards that amusement, my skepticism as to the need for ceremonial machinery was well founded. There was no reason for it except a tradition-ridden habit; every one learned with relief that the fun of dancing could be had without the preparation, the fatigue, the heart-burning excitement of the formal dance.

Now, is not something of the same sort true of social life for children? Why make a bugbear of it? It is apparent to every open-minded observer that social life, recreation-in-common, is as definite a need of humanity as bread or fire. Children will have it whether we like it or not. The best we can do is to try to color their social life with wholesomeness and spontaneity and true light-heartedness, rather than as it is so sadly often colored—with vanity and competition and egotism and self-seeking. And here is the link, which, to my mind at least, connects the subject with self-reliance. If children can be trained not to depend upon cumbrous social machinery for their social fun, but to create it themselves, spontaneously, out of the material available on any chance occasion, their natural hunger for it will be appeased by wholesome food,

and the meretricious and false will have much less appeal to them. Now, to innovate any new thing, to create any thing at all, requires much more initiative and resourcefulness than to roll along a groove smoothed by custom, and initiative and resourcefulness in social matters, like those qualities in other lines, can only be attained by opportunity for practise.

Such opportunity must be of long duration if it is to engender a habit, and "social life" can and should begin with quite young children, with no less hackneyed a device than the play tea-party. Instead of a rarely occurring, elaborately prepared-for, long drawn-out "children's party" once or twice a year, let every passing event or anniversary be celebrated by an impromptu gathering of the usual "crowd" of playmates. For this occasion, instead of a hard-and-fast program of entertainment, a succession of "things-to-do" thought out beforehand, and imposed upon the children according to schedule, leave much, if not all, to the inspiration of the moment, the freshness of which will certainly make up for the lack of formal preparation. And, above all, accustom the children from the first to feel a cheerful and competent responsibility for their own fun, rather than a passive willingness to be amused if the entertainment offered comes up to their high standard for entertainment. One of our great-

grandmothers would probably have laughed outright at the notion that children need to be trained to be self-reliant enough to produce their own fun. But if she had ever been present at a social gathering of modern city children and observed their bored listless acceptance of one "parlor entertainer" after another and their total inability to initiate any fun-making activity for themselves, her laughter would have turned into dismay.

"Let's have a party," should evoke no aghast, bone-wearying premonition of long bother and expense for adults, no anxious worrying about costumes on the part of the children. Above all, it should mean for children no long interval between the hospitable impulse and its execution, the usual week or ten-day interval which allows time for the warmth of the feeling to cool and harden into set and cumbersome forms. "Let's have a party," should usually have as response, an eager, lighthearted "All right." "When?" "This afternoon?" Or, "To-morrow?" Or, "As soon as we can get word to Roger and Mary, who live out in the country?"

If one wants to begin training in some elementary ceremonies, an hour or so is spent in writing simple notes of invitation: "Dear Margie: We are going to have a charade-party to-morrow evening from seven to nine. I hope your mother will

let you come." Or a house-to-house expedition is made by the prospective host, who asks to see the mother of his prospective guest, explains his purpose to her and asks that Margie be allowed to come. Since the telephone has become such an adjunct to our modern social life, one might well accept it, and occasionally let the children call up the mothers of their playmates, and learn to ask courteously for the presence of the desired little guests. Any of these simple proceedings are agonizing ordeals to children who have had no social training, and one of the results of the frequent and informal social life here advocated is the inevitable natural increase in comfort and self-reliance which comes to children who frequently go through these ordinary forms of social intercourse. It is well, for all the easy-going nature of your party, not to allow the invitation to be issued by a yell from one back yard to another, with no reference to mothers involved.

When the invitations have been issued the young hosts and their parents should have a hasty conference as to what to do for entertainment, choosing between the literally infinite possibilities for simple lively fun. "Shall we have a candy-pull? Or shall we play charades?" The first necessitates a looking into kitchen supplies of sugar, molasses and the like; the latter a hasty gathering together of old portières

for royal robes, fur rugs for wild animals, perhaps a gilt-paper crown or so, if the playroom contains such; sheets for ghosts, shawls for draperies and such easily procured stage properties; and neither of them needs more than ten minutes' attention before the hastily summoned guests arrive. Or perhaps the choice lies between "Shall we have a picnic?" and "Shall we just play games—stage-coach, still-pond-no-more-moving, hunt the thimble, and the like?" Or, "Shall we set the Victrola going and have a dance?" If a picnic is decided upon, do not spend a whole morning, nor have your cook spend a whole morning, in making elaborate sandwiches and packing a big hamper with costly ready-to-eat food. Make your picnic more like an encampment, with a fire where chops may be broiled, each child holding his own over the coals, with a forked stick which he himself has cut. Or let them cook bacon, which may then be clapped between slices of bread cut from the loaf on the spot. Depend for your fun more on active games in the open, "Pom-pom, pull-away," "Black man" and the like, than on complicated viands. The children will almost certainly enjoy the occasion much more; and the preparations will be so simple that the picnic may recur as often as the children like.

For indoor "parties," too, it is an easy matter, if the right kind of thought is taken, to provide enter-

tainment which is based (as it ought to be based) on activity for the children during the party, rather than for adults beforehand. A good sample of what may be done is the sculptor's party. A couple of pounds of modeling clay, or prepared wax, costs little, can be used over and over, and insures absorbed interest and peals of laughter. Cover the dining-room table with oil-cloth, give each child a lump of clay and a piece of paper. He writes on the paper the name of an animal, and puts it into a box. When all have done this, the box is shaken, and each draws out at random a slip. Without showing the others the name of the animal written on it he sets to work to model this in clay. The animal recognized by the largest number of those present, wins the contest, and if desired, the artist may be awarded a simple prize.

Afterward hands are washed, the oil-cloth removed, hot cocoa and sandwiches are passed, after which there can be a round of home-games, "Blindman's-buff," "I spy," "Three guesses," "When my ship comes in."

There is no reason why an ordinarily competent child of ten or twelve, who has been accustomed to this sort of lightly worn, easy-going hospitality, should not plan and conduct such an afternoon "party" as this from beginning to end, from issuing the invitations to making the cocoa or lemonade,

and so have the wholesome experience as often as once a week if desired. It is doubtful whether any formal information acquired at school is any more valuable to him than the trained capacity to organize and carry through wholesome entertainment for himself and his companions. I hope my readers see it by this time as I do, as truly a manifestation of self-reliance, to know how to create some pleasure out of hours-in-common, as to be able to find one's way about a strange city by means of a map.

As the children grow older they will probably no longer play "I spy" or "Stage-coach," but if they have back of them years of such lively, active, laughter-filled homes, there is a strong probability that they will resist with energy the pressure put upon young people to amuse themselves solely in the stereotyped ways prescribed by society. They will be the young people who do not spend themselves and their substance on attempts at elaborate food and theater parties, following the dimly glimpsed example of listless, elderly wealthy people in great cities. They will form the "set" which gets its fun out of cross-country walks, and skating parties, and amateur theatricals and impromptu musicales, the "set" which can not be together an hour without organizing some active, spontaneous, wholesome, harmless fun, in the making of which their boundless young energy has found an outlet. Such a

group of young people is quite as great an asset to a town as a colony of social-service workers.

Moreover, if, as so frequently happens in the shifting instability of American social life, the "set" is scattered, every one is a nucleus for just such healthy social life wherever he goes, and, from his own experience, can inculcate the vital teaching, that even for enjoyment an active attitude of mind is more successful than the passive, that even when one is seeking mere entertainment, he is more apt to get it if he shares in the making of it.

CHAPTER VIII

THE USE OF BOOKS AND LIBRARIES

THERE are two halves to every self-reliant act. First, the mental impulse to master conditions; second, the ability to use tools fit to compass the end. In practical life, the second often goes before the first, for the consciousness of the ability competently to use the right tools often arouses the impulse to master conditions: the habit of success in practising with the implements means self-confidence and courage to take them up.

Now there are tools and tools: there are literal tools, like hammers and saws, and needles and thread which every one emerging from a well-spent childhood knows instinctively how to use. And there are less palpable tools like the ability to keep accounts and to plan expeditions, the use of which tends to sturdy self-reliance no less than does the habit of walking on one's own two feet and not being pushed in a wheeled-chair. But of all the tools in this world it is doubtful if any are so useful to twentieth-century people, as books, and the capacity to extract from them the information and guidance which they so amply contain.

Since school life, to a greater extent than home life, is outwardly concerned with books, parents often feel that there is no need for them to say anything on the subject; but as a matter of fact few school children are taught anything like the extent to which books may be used to supply their needs. I do not speak here of any of the higher, more spiritual sustenance which may be drawn from books. I am not referring here to the permanent and golden satisfactions to be derived from a love of general good reading. I mean to take up here merely the use of books as concrete tools to accomplish a given end. There is material enough in the subject for more than one brief chapter. Centuries ago when the first books were printed, the human mind was freed from its age-old dependence on spoken instruction. And yet few people realized this. Books were rather scarce, and for the most part instruction went on being accomplished by means of verbal give-and-take as it was in prehistoric days. Seventy-five years ago Carlyle cried out upon university lectures as lingering anachronisms in the modern world, crammed full of cheap and well-written books. Books have grown vastly more plentiful and less expensive than even in Carlyle's day; but his motto of "every man his own professor" has met with an acceptance by no means universal. But now following Carlyle there comes

an army of devoted assistants called librarians, and, if the parents will do their share, the next generation will have a habit new to the world, the habit of the scholar, now become for the first time possible for the plain man, of fortifying his single personality with the wisdom and insight of all who have ever thought.

Librarians are like teachers in many respects. They gather in conventions where they lay their keen-witted heads together and think out plans for luring the public into their beneficent nets; they write and read professional journals which keep them abreast of the latest devices for circumventing the inertia, the thick-headedness and the illiteracy of their countrymen; and their roving eyes are quick to perceive every opportunity given them. We can safely leave much of the library education of our children to these energetic and ingenious forwarders of the public weal—if we see to it that they are able ever to lay their hands on our children! For even modern American librarians can accomplish little by the absent treatment. How can we get our children into the hands of librarians? In the first place by working for the establishment of a library, if there is none in our community (there are still libraryless towns, I suppose, in America, though it is hard to believe); by seeing to it that the librarian appointed is not some worthy and superannuated

dame whose main preoccupation is the fear that some reader may carry off a volume, but is a brisk, forth-putting librarian, well trained in modern methods and encouraged to do her best by a decent salary; by further heartening her by a show of interest in her work; and, most of all, by arranging as a matter of course that our children shall spend a certain proportion of their free hours browsing in a library under the supervision of a specialist in books. The rest we can leave to our librarian.

But the best of all book-habits she can not inculcate because she does not live with the children hour by hour and day by day as we do. This best book-habit is quite simply the habit of using books steadily, as a matter of course. And, like all habits, it can best be inculcated by the irresistible force of example. The parents themselves should use books as freely, as naturally, to help themselves to information as they use knives and forks to help themselves to food. The dictionary should be in almost as frequent employment as the broom, and the encyclopedia as soap and water. The family talk should be punctuated, naturally, simply, in quite a matter-of-fact way by references to one or another reference book. High-school teachers report that many of their pupils do not know how to look up a subject in an encyclopedia, that they are wholly put off if they do not find it indexed under the first heading

which occurs to them, and are entirely without resourcefulness as to means to dig out the ore from that great gold mine of human knowledge. This is a tool of self-reliance, the use of which can be taught them only at home by means of repeated comradely excursions into books.

Somebody sees in an illustrated magazine a picture of Malay pearl-fishers and asks: "Father, what *is* a Malay, anyhow?"

"Well, son, to tell the truth, I don't exactly know how they do differ from Hindus or Chinamen, but let's look 'em up."

In this case the general topic, "Malay," is instantly found in the index; the training for the child consists in hunting out in the rather formidable mass of information about the Malay archipelago, the particular item he desires about the race itself. He learns from seeing his father do it, how to run through "Geography," "Flora," "Fauna," "Geology," "History," "Habits," and to pounce on the heading "Ethnology" for a careful reading and settling of his question. He learns that the list of books printed under the heading "Bibliography," after each article, are the books that the writer of the article believes most valuable for a more thorough study of the subject. At times when his interest is particularly aroused he will carry his investigations further. He will make a list of the books

referred to and show them to the librarian. Following her advice as to which of them he would be most likely to find clear and intelligible, he will take out two or more from the library, read them, and from their agreement or disagreement make up his mind as to what is well established about the subject and what is still in dispute. Incidentally he is very apt to linger somewhat as he goes along and to absorb a certain amount of other information, but that is not the point made here, which is that he is learning how to depend upon himself, to find an answer to his own questions.

With this growing knowledge of the help to be had from books, is almost sure to come a beginning of the book-buying impulse, which is of inestimable value in a modern life. For the boy who is interested in carpenters' tools, any one of the good manuals issued is a better Christmas present than a story of adventure, which (for the single reading that he will care to give it) he can get out of a library. Hardly a publishing firm omits from its list of books, one or more "how-to-make" books for children, a fair assortment of which should be furnished them along with stockings and shoes, and, if possible, one of the better children's substitutes for adult encyclopedias should be on the shelves of the playroom. This is not so essential, however, as the publishers of those works would have us believe, be-

cause children well trained can very soon learn how to use for themselves the grown-up books of reference.

I am taking it for granted that every family will have a dictionary, an atlas, and as good an encyclopedia as they can afford; and so they should have, no matter how they have to stint and save to buy them. But I know, of course, that many families do not have good books of reference. Perhaps the father does not sympathize with the question-asking of the children; perhaps after food and shelter are paid for there is no money left for books. In such a family there is no need for the livelier intellects to despair; they have to be a little more patient, that is all. Somewhere, at the library, at school, or at some neighbor's house, there is an encyclopedia which they are welcome to inspect. When the question arises, "How is silk made?" one of the children is delegated to look the matter up during the next day and report to the family at dinner-time. If the family is keen-witted the evening report on last night's questions may become an entertaining institution. Perhaps two children may look up the same topic and see which can present the fullest report. Perhaps a judicious parent may unobtrusively suggest questions which will introduce the children to fascinating subjects for research.

A well-indexed loose-leaf scrap-book is an ex-

cellent adjunct to the book-buying habit. Through most homes, nowadays, there passes in and out a flood of magazines, many of which have in them useful and interesting items, well worth preserving, but which are whirled along with the current that carries them down-cellar to the furnace or out to the ash-can. If each child is shown to make an alphabetically arranged scrap-book, he will take pleasure in putting down in it all sorts of odds and ends that bear on his interests; items about skating or birds' eggs or even the personalities of his idolized baseball stars. If he learns from them how to save what will be of service to him from the overwhelming bulk of periodical literature, how to keep his information from slipping away from him, how to set it in such order that he can find it when he wants it, he will have acquired the habit that will help him in college, and indeed all through his life. Moreover these books make the most interesting records of a child's interests. At fourteen he is immensely amused and diverted by what he chose to preserve at eight; and at twenty by his interests of fourteen; and this occasional self-survey has its value.

One of the excellent factors of intellectual self-reliance which should be taught a child who is acquiring the habit of handling books intelligently, is that he must not swallow them whole, but must

depend more or less upon his own sense of the inherent probabilities. For this purpose it is necessary to have a variety of books of reference available, either at home, or in the nearest library, and to show him how to check up an English authority by reference to an American one; a Boston historian of the Civil War by one from Virginia.

In using all these books of reference which contain exact information, the aim of the parent should be to banish the slipshod, helpless phrase, "I wish I knew—" and substitute in its place an energetic impulse to find out the answer, and a self-reliant security that the answer is to be found.

CHAPTER IX

MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

SUCCESS or failure in adult life depends largely on the energy, courage and self-reliance with which one attacks the problem of making his dreams come true. Self-confidence in any enterprise comes as a rule from remembrance of past success, and it is part of the duty of a good home to furnish enough successes to create the habit of that reasonable self-assurance which leads to initiative and self-reliance.

In several of the other chapters, under other headings, mention has been made of dreams realized, like the family camp, the cave, the house in the tree, al. the results of a masterful attitude toward raw material. This chapter is intended to supplement these suggestions and to explain more clearly the principle involved.

Long before Freud was heard of, wise old men and life-experienced women knew that emotion which finds no outlet in action is unwholesome and debilitating. The form in which that age-old wisdom has been put by the modern vocabulary is unfortunate. To say that suppressed desires are dangerous seems to mean that children should

have anything they happen to desire. It means merely that an arbitrary suppression of a desire by external violence or circumstance is a bad thing. If the individual himself, consciously chooses to give up his desire because it interferes with something else he wants more, the desire is conquered, not suppressed; and if he consciously and intelligently realizes that his desire is a genuinely impossible one, no sore place is left in his subconsciousness. Probably nobody ever suffered obscure nervous ills at not being able to take a trip to the moon, or to walk on the water, because, although such a desire might arise from a childish whim, the manifest impossibility of those undertakings is patent to any sane eye, even to a young child's eye. There are other desires, analogous to the baby's wish to catch the pretty candle-flame in his fingers. The wise mother neither snatches the baby away altogether from the flame, nor lets him burn his little fingers. She holds him securely in her arms and, his hand in hers, lets the baby fingers approach close enough to the heat, so that a natural instinct of self-preservation bids him of his own accord draw back his hand. What has happened there is that the baby's desire to hold the flame has succumbed to his desire not to be hurt. His mother has not suppressed any desire of his. The baby has chosen between two alternatives, and, being a

healthy, unspoiled human organism, has chosen for his own good.

Let us repeat again these two psychological axioms: first, "emotion which finds no outlet in action is unwholesome and debilitating"; second, "suppressed desires" (that is, suppressed by external circumstance and not by the will of the individual) are dangerous factors in human lives. Bearing these in mind, consider what you would answer to a little boy of eight or nine who says, wistfully, "Oh, I *wish* we lived where Indians are! I *wish* I was an Indian!" As a modern parent you dare not practise the negligent offhand methods of the parents of two generations ago, who said briskly, "What nonsense, Jimmy! If I hear any more such talk, I'll know how to make you stop it! Go and split your kindlings this minute!" You remember that such parents were always cut to the heart when the most energetic of their sons ran away from home to lead a roaming life. But, on the other hand, you say to yourself with the humorous despair which is a frequent mood with modern parents : "Good gracious, we can't be expected to move out to an Indian reservation and live in a wigwam! If there were no other reasons, before we got there, Jimmy would have forgotten his Indians and want to be a sailor." You find yourself, in short, in such a dilemma that you are actually forced to give some genuine

thought to the matter, difficult as that is. When you have done this, you realize that Jimmy does not really want to *be* an Indian at all. His limited vocabulary has led him into an inexact phrasing of the vague desire which stirs in him. What he wants is to have some experience of the Indian way of life; and it is quite possible for him to "be" enough of an Indian in your back yard, entirely to satisfy him. So, suppressing a sigh at the complications of the modern parent's life, you undertake to help Jimmy be an Indian. If you do not merely buy for him an Indian suit and let it go at that, but instead, if you go heartily with him into his new life, you will not improbably be rewarded by forgetting to sigh: you will find that you feel a considerable interest in Indians yourself. You and Jimmy begin with an expedition to the nearest sapling thicket to cut poles for your wigwam. If no saplings whatever are to be had (and this will hardly ever be the case) bamboo fishing poles might be used. Then when these are set up, you make your wigwam cover, consulting books of Indian lore as you do, books that will almost certainly be better reading matter for Jimmy than the exciting story of Indian adventure which probably started him off. You figure out the size of cover needed, enlarge patterns from your books and cut your cover. Then it must be decorated. This involves more solid reading about Indian art

and symbolism and the application of it to Jimmy's Indian existence. What tribe will he choose to be a member of? What symbols will he choose for his Indian home? What will be his Indian name?

Then he moves in, rolls himself up in his blanket and sleeps on the ground (with rubber under him unobtrusively placed there by his squaw-mother). He learns how to make a tiny Indian fire in the middle of his new shelter (cloth can be fireproofed by household methods), and either to endure patiently the inevitably resultant smoke or to reflect secretly that perhaps it is as well to have a civilized home for an occasional retreat. He "reads up" on what Indians eat, how they cook their corn-meal, and what utensils they use. If his interest still holds, he can make, or help make, or watch somebody make (according to his tool-using capacity) a bow and arrows, and practise shooting at a home-made target in the back yard, or on "family hikes" at trees or stones or squirrels (the latter quite safe from his attacks). He goes on to buy ten-cent-a-yard canton flannel and a ten-cent package of brown dye, and from a combination of the two evolves imitation buck-skin, natural-looking enough for any ten-year-old brave; and he paints on this Indian costume a repetition of the symbols and designs he put upon his wigwam.

By this time the little boy who sighed wistfully

and helplessly "Oh, I *wish* I was an Indian!" has disappeared and in his place there is a hard-working youngster too full of his fascinating occupations to have any time or strength for fantastic whims, and yet, such is the nature of children, just as his parents get really interested in the subject, he will probably have his fill of Indian and suddenly want to be a chauffeur on a motor-truck. In the moment of exasperation that inevitably comes to logically and consequentially minded adults at this fitfulness of interest in young children, let his mother remember that her little son has had some weeks of very profitable play out of his fancy, that he has acquired considerable information and dexterity of hand, that he has had what for a ten-year-old amounts to adventure, without which no healthy child life is long endurable; he has learned that wishes are not to be gratified without effort, and, finally, that he has begun the habit of turning an emotion into action, of doing something to make his dreams come true.

Well, what shall she do when he wants to be the driver of a motor-truck? She can hardly manage that in the back yard, can she? No, she can hardly give him a full-sized motor-truck, but she can help him fit up a child's, play, foot-propelled automobile as some sort of imitation of the coveted vehicle. An express wagon can be fastened behind

and loaded with empty boxes, a last-year's license-number can be hung at the axle. One dry-battery cell can be made to ring an electric bell as he wheels around the back yard, delivering an empty starch box at the grape arbor, taking on a can of ashes at the kitchen door. If he is old enough and mechanically-minded enough to make anything out of the subject, she can set him studying the principle of the gasoline engine. He can experiment somewhat with dry cells, noting how much livelier is the spark of the induced current from a coil (and he can make the coil himself) than that of the primary dry-cell current. Perhaps as a reward for progress in understanding the diagrams in his book on motor construction, he can be taken to a garage where the mechanic (if paid for his time) will make the whole subject clearer by illustrating it with more or less dismantled motors. Perhaps a short ride could be procured for him beside the real driver of a real truck.

Take another concrete case—the children who have been to the theater or the moving pictures or the circus, and who "want to have a play." If their interest seems at all genuine, don't let their desire evaporate in mere idle wishing. There is wholesome occupation for some months in making this dream come true, and the "stage struck" overwrought element of their interest in the theater will probably be

worked off in the abundant opportunity for honest labor offered them. Help them decide on a play suitable for children to give,—a dramatization of a fairy-tale, an historical incident, a Bible story, or the like. There are plenty of such already written and published, but it would be better if they could write it themselves, with suggestions from teacher and mother. Then, with unbleached muslin, dye, raveled rope, gilt-paper, wands, shawls, rugs and similar raw materials, the family embarks upon a costume and wig-making campaign which can be carried on while the rôles are being learned and rehearsed. If the resultant performance promises to be at all creditable, let the children give it in the largest room in the house, or in a neighbor's house, and charge a small admission, the money to go (if the children are used to helping out in charities) to a children's ward in a hospital, or for a fresh-air fund: or, if they have not this gracious habit and would give the money grudgingly, let them keep it for a "raw-material fund" for more costumes for the next performance. Or have them give the "play" simply as the main feature of one of their frequently recurring informal "children's parties." The costumes, wigs and accessories can be put away in a big box or trunk ready to call on, for the next play.

In this case, as with the little boy who *wished* he

was an Indian, the children have been stirred out of the tendency of vaguely and passively longing for a thing, and roused to take some action about it. They have had some experience of a mental process most vital to the masterful intelligent ordering of their lives, in bringing a partly unformulated desire consciously up before their deliberate thought, and considering it closely and coherently. Instead of suffering a dim emotional ache, they have learned to ask themselves the honest questions which solve so many difficulties in later life,—such questions as these: "Now exactly what is it that I want? What can I do about getting it? If I am not able to get exactly that, is there some modification of it which I might get? Am I willing to give the time and effort necessary to get this modification? If not, my desire for it can not be very deep."

Do not let the little boy who wants to be an acrobat in the circus receive an impatient categorical denial of his preposterous request. Give him an old mattress, or a pile of hay in the barn to practise on. Set him to turning somersaults at first. Then, if his desire continues, find some older boy or some gymnasium instructor who can show him how to walk on his hands, or do the "baby swing" off a bar. One of two things will shortly happen. Either he will decide that the circus business is less attractive than he fancied, or he will develop a fondness for

gymnastics that will give him an absorbingly healthy interest throughout adolescence, long after the ambition to perform in a circus ring has been forgotten. In no case will he think to himself, "I wanted to lead a free and interesting life, but my family prevented it: they never sympathize with me!"

CHAPTER X

FINANCIAL SELF-RELIANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

BECAUSE children are, in the nature of things, incapable of being economically independent, it is too often taken for granted that there is no way to teach them economic responsibility until they can actually earn their own livings. It is true that the teaching of any abstract principle rests of necessity upon accurate information about the facts, and upon practical acquaintance with those facts. And it is true that the teaching of financial responsibility is no exception to this rule. But we are too prone to overlook the fact that it is only money getting of which children can have little or no practical experience, and money getting is but half of economic independence and financial responsibility. Money spending is quite as important a science, though as a subject of serious study it is sadly neglected. There is nothing in the fact of being children which need cut off our sons and daughters from a great deal of accurate information and considerable practical experience with the ins and outs of wise money spending. But there is a great deal in the fact of their being Americans, which will shut

them off from such information and experience unless we parents make a very determined effort to see that they get the proper training. For the whole spirit of our country and age is against us in the effort. Outside the family we will nowhere find any allies in this training. All of which simply shows how vitally essential it is that we should see to it that our children are not left uninformed of facts and tendencies that have so large an influence on their formation of the general habits of self-reliance and responsibility.

All over the country there are successful schools which devote themselves to the instruction of salesmen. Men naturally acute, keen-witted and forceful find wherever they turn, well-written books and experienced teachers to perfect them in the art of selling. The ideal of this vast army of salespeople is not to sell to people that which they desire and for which they feel a legitimate need. No, any fool can sell under those conditions. Their avowed ideal is to cultivate their personality, their imagination, their knowledge of psychology, until they are masters of the situation and can sell people what they do not desire and do not need, and in many cases can not afford. In the picturesque language of one of these highly gifted individuals, "When I'm in tip-top condition I can sell a man the shirt on his own back."

Add to this great army of resolute, well-drilled, experienced salesmen, the innumerable scintillating department stores where the best quality of brain is put into tempting passers-by to become purchasers: add to this the loose, vague American open-handedness and distaste for the idea of thrift; add to this a population of untrained women whose creative occupations are for the most part gone, and who without preparation or thought are pushed by circumstances into copious buying, and the sum total is enough to stagger the imagination. Everybody accepts as a matter of course the energy, the intellectual effort, the acumen which are bestowed upon learning how to sell. Schools and classes and text-books for salesmen seem the most natural things in the world to Americans. Nobody notices that there are only a very few, scattered and faint-hearted books which attempt to teach the art of wise buying for a family, and none at all, not one, which expounds the great art of not buying what you don't need. And yet, in our industrial society organized as it is, a considerable part of one's usefulness, and a large part of one's happiness depends upon one's developing somehow the capacity not to buy. Those who never acquire that capacity go down to shipwreck in modern America as surely as morphine victims or paranœics. Those who painfully do acquire a certain amount of

ability not to buy, do so in the most casual, haphazard fashion, not conscious of what they are about, saved by a healthy reflex instinct from which (although it is a mental one and ought to be fully under their conscious control) they are as detached as from the battle of the white blood corpuscles with invading germs.

Most women are occupied necessarily so often with the legitimate buying of goods, which has taken the place of the old home creation of goods, that it is very hard for them to resist the subtly phrased temptation to buy for the sake of buying, which is injected into their veins from every magazine advertisement, from every show-window, from every whiffling change of fashion. The cases are not infrequent in which a mind otherwise normal succumbs entirely to the overwhelming suggestion, and falls a victim to a mania as unbalanced (and almost as dangerous) as the homicidal mania. Many and many an alienist can tell of cases of young and healthy women in insane asylums, who sit all day long ordering, and ordering, and ordering goods, who laboriously write orders for everything advertised in the magazines, who order half a dozen Pierce Arrow cars, and five dozen solid silver table services, and for whom a mail-order catalogue brings on almost a delirium. And those of us who are not alienists but only somewhat experi-

enced in life, know of tragic cases in our own circles in which this lack of mental equilibrium, this superinduced monomania has not gone far enough to warrant confining the victim in an asylum, but where the happiness of a whole family is wrecked by the malignant aberration. The humorous adaptation of the maxim attributed to English sportsmen, "It's a fine day, let us go out and kill something," into the American feminine motto, "It's a fine day, let us go out and buy something," raises but a grim and uneasy smile on the lips of honest observers of American life. There are some jokes that are too pointed!

It seems extraordinary in view of all these circumstances, that there is nowhere any systematic course offered for the training of buyers, the profession which the vast majority of American women take up, whether they have any talent for it or not. There are, it is true, in some schools occasional detached lectures given on the buying of a few commodities. The cooking-school teacher gives a lecture or two or a demonstration or two about the buying of meats. The sewing teacher makes an occasional remark about the buying of fabrics and the teacher of hygiene gives an annual warning about buying too much candy. Since this advice, such as it is, is much more than was ever vouch-

safed to our generation when we were in the formative period, we should accept it for our children with all due gratitude; but it should not blind us to the fact that our boys and girls in growing up, are rapidly approaching a life in which wise general buying bears vitally on their happiness and usefulness, and that they are getting in most cases no experience or instruction whatever to guide them through the complicated wilderness of a society whose main business seems to be the production of multifarious articles and the forcing them upon a hypnotized and object-struck public.

Here is a branch of instruction which parents, if anybody, must take up. Here is a subject which can be taught in the home (which depends so much on individual buying for its conduct) much better than in the modern school where buying is done in vast wholesale lots—dozens and grosses and hundreds, which stun and lame the sense of proportion of an ordinary individual. And here is an activity in which self-reliance and responsibility form the very bed-rock of a healthy life. If a child can be taught to be self-reliant, to depend on his own good sense as to what he needs to buy rather than on the chance whim of his neighbors, many entangling and embittering complications of modern life are forever removed from his path. And if he

has the habit of honest responsibility toward his expenditures, he will stand four-square and upright to any later wind that may blow.

Now in this, as in all other attempts to instruct children, those Argos-eyed detectives of insincerity, the parents will do well to have a private examination of the state of their own souls before they undertake the regeneration of younger ones, and to set their own minds in careful order before they try to clarify the ideas of their children. For it will not do to expound a system of sensible and courageous family expenditures, and then spend more than can be afforded for clothes or house-furnishings intended not for beauty or comfort or use, but to arouse envy in others. Children waste no time in pouncing on such an inconsistency in a matter that has been called to their attention.

Of course the child can not in the nature of things actually undertake the responsibility of much of the family buying. (The following chapter takes up the question of the money he may very well actually spend.) But he can from an early age be taken into the family councils on the subject, can be present at that periodical, reasonable and unhurried "taking account of stock" which is the only way rationally to direct family expenditures. With great advantage to himself, he can be present at, and even raise his small voice in, the discussion as to the

apportioning of the family income, and can take in by means of repeated encounters with it, the law which governs most lives: that one must choose, one can not have everything, and that for most of us, if we choose one thing we can not have another. If the tone of these discussions is, as it should be, cheerful and brave and matter-of-fact in accepting the necessity for choice, the child's character matures in them as corn matures in August heat. He sloughs off painlessly the infantile habit of crying for the moon, and develops all unconsciously a sense of proportion which will save him from the period of giddy staggering to and fro, which is too often the lot of young people suddenly released from unthinking childish dependence into a totally unprepared-for economic independence.

The maturing of the mind and character as a result of contact with the facts of the world—that is one definition of the quality we call "responsibility" and it is surprising that parents should make so little use of such a natural and simple expedient for bringing the child into contact with a whole order of facts. And yet there are few families where the custom of family councils over the exchequer is made the means for giving the children a sense of financial responsibility. There are, alas, innumerable American families in which adolescents of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, have been kept

in the utterly irresponsible condition of little children, who ask for anything that comes into their heads, just as a little child does, with no notion whatever of the relation of their demand to other family expenditures, and who receive the curt unexplaining answer which should only be given to little children, "No, you can't have it. We haven't got the money."

If the family expenditures are no mystery to him, if he has from as early as he can remember been present at a quarterly or monthly, or bi-annual family accounting and planning, he will quite simply have *grown* out of a childish and irresponsible attitude toward money as he has grown out of an interest in rocking-horses. And he will know before he asks for something whether it is a reasonable request or not, how it compares with the amount spent on other things. The habit characteristic of the permanent "dependent," of asking for anything on the chance that *this* time the keeper of the purse-strings may be teased to loosen them, will be left forever in the past. It is good for boys to come gradually and slowly into this knowledge of the inelasticity of a fixed sum of money, because although their later life is quite sure to teach it to them somehow, the process is apt to be violent and painful. And it is especially good for girls to grasp this idea early in life, because there is always

a chance that if they do not learn it then they may never become acquainted with it, and that is as bad as possible for them and for all who touch them in any capacity.

Furthermore, just as they are present as listening students at family councils, they should occasionally be taken on a well-regulated buying trip, and taught how to avoid that invention of the Evil One, a "shopping" expedition. Modern scientific investigations of stealing among children and those of immature minds agree that one main cause is the presence of irresistible temptation offered by carefully arranged show-windows and shop-counters. The merchants put every ounce of their inventiveness into such displays and we sheep-like parents, hypnotized by advertisements stating that it "amuses" the children to be taken shopping, lead our little folks dazed and blinking up one aisle and down another, so that their weak, half-formed, highly impressionable characters may feel the full blast of this fevered stimulus to their covetousness. Instead of this, they should with their mother go through her sane reasonable preparations for a buying expedition: the itemized statement of the different needs to be covered, the decision before leaving home as to which are really essentials and which may be left out if necessary, the clear general idea as to relative amounts of money to be spent. They should

have seen, so many times, that it is as familiar as the multiplication table, a well-ordered, well-thought-out shopping list. It is in itself an education for the difficult enterprise of buying for a modern family.

Then should follow the invigorating experience of holding to the list in the face of the innumerable alluring temptations to depart from it, which beset the path of every buyer. With the list as a chart, and a sound understanding of the fact that there are only one hundred cents to be extracted from every dollar, as ballast, the mother and child can safely navigate even the perilous region of a big department store.

The practical value of the experience is very great. An impression is made on the child's mind which he never forgets, when he has been present at one after another of those brisk, resourceful and clear-sighted skirmishes in which his mother pits her ingenuity, her good judgment and her philosophy against circumstances. The curtains they wanted to buy for the hall are too costly. Well, then, let's see what is the next best. Perhaps the desired color could be found in less expensive material. Is this, or is it not, something which will stand wear, and living with, and frequent cleanings? How would it harmonize with what is already in that room? Perhaps after all, simple crisp

white curtains would serve as well; and that would leave more for the hoarded vacation fund. Or would the richness and warmth of the color and texture be worth sacrificing something else to?

Such discussions and colloquies can lay no claim to the slightest moral elevation; but they indicate to the child, a cheerful, homely and purposeful way of settling questions of expenditure: and they form the best safeguard against "shopping" as it is generally conducted in the United States, a dawdling, wistful, aimless fingering over of goods too expensive to be bought, and then a dissatisfied purchase of the closest imitation possible of the costly article. One of the rules of the game in such educational buying as a part of child-training, should be to conduct the enterprise with all possible expedition, to have the list compact, and well-arranged, so that no time will be lost, and to despatch each item as briskly as a due consideration of its merits will allow. To be able to do in one afternoon sufficient well-planned economical shopping, so that a whole fortnight may be clear of the necessity of entering another shop (except to buy the daily food)—that is a time-saving feat which might well receive honorable mention from the family gathering that evening, and which would tend to give buying the relative importance it deserves in the conduct of life.

As the child grows older, and has absorbed the family atmosphere of systematic and well-proportioned expenditures, he can be trusted with an allowance of his own (see following chapter), and as he emerges into the positive tastes and ardent desires of adolescence he should be promoted from being a mere onlooker at the family council-table, and should have a vote of his own as to relative values. Every privilege should be ballasted by the bestowal of a new activity, and on the adolescent's broadening shoulders should now be laid an occasional actual responsibility for one or another of the financial transactions of the family. "Here, Frank, our accounts show that we always spend every winter, about so much to get the sidewalks shoveled free of snow (or the garden made, or the ashes taken away, or the wood-supply brought in, or the grass mowed, or the cellar cleaned, or the rugs beaten, or the windows washed, etc., etc.). How would you like to contract for the job and see if you can make anything out of it? You can do it all yourself, or hire a man to do the heaviest part, or pay your schoolmates to help you—any arrangement you like. We won't interfere as long as the work is done as well as usual, but if you make a miscalculation, you'll have to pay the deficit out of your allowance."

Or: "Mary, what do you say to this plan for this summer's vacation? Our usual meat bill is so much.

If you can feed us as well as we usually fare, and yet make something out of buying the meat and fish, you are welcome to your profits. Of course, if the meals aren't good you lose your chance."

But first, last and all the time, this financial education should bring out the fact that buying goods is not, as too many women feel it, an entertaining way of passing an idle hour or so, two or three times a week. Children who for years have been in contact with a serious-minded, intelligent, responsible attitude toward spending money, will know instinctively that buying is one of the vital processes in modern life which needs at least as much thought and experience and training as selling. Never having seen it, they will never fall into the slip-shod method of hand-to-mouth buying, which, done without any forethought or careful planning, dribbles aimlessly along, occupying a part of nearly every day, which might better be devoted to useful labor. They will be as ashamed to be obliged to "run out for a spool of thread or some pins," as they would to have to send out at a meal for salt or sugar. The purchase of supplies needed for the family will be given careful thought, and condensed into widely spaced, energetic and compendious hours of buying, conducted with the same brisk purposefulness as the periodical cleaning of a room, or doing of the weekly washing—one morn-

ing a week, or fortnight, or month, given up to buying, and no thought given the matter in the intervals.

Armed with this system, this mental attitude and with the recollection of the sage who cried out in devout thankfulness, "How fortunate I am in the number of things I do not want!" our children are headed straight for financial responsibility and stability.

CHAPTER XI

ALLOWANCES

"IN MAKING his annual statement of the budget," defines a writer on the British Constitution, "the Chancellor of the Exchequer gives a view of the general financial policy of the government, and at the same time presents an estimate of the probable income and expenditure for the next twelve months."

Unless the house mother is prepared to be in this sense the chancellor of the exchequer, she can accomplish nothing in the way of training her children by means of allowances. Every writer on child-training is frequently asked one or all of the following questions: "What do you think of allowances for children? Should they be small, for pocket money only, or large to include all expenses? At what age should they begin?" And most educators of experience answer sorrowfully that if the general family habit of expenditure is not based on a system involving reason, forethought and self-control, the less said about allowances for children the better. Large or small they will do no good un-

less the child has before him a daily example of forethought in expenditure.

The key to the situation is the budget system. The budget system is the beginning and end of all wisdom in the matter. Without it, no matter how large the income, there are confusion and waste and demoralization. With it, no matter how rigid the economy needed, there are harmony and proportion and responsibilty. If there is a budget system already in force, allowances for children are invaluable aids to the growth of their self-reliance. Without it allowances are worse than useless since the habit of careless, unthinking and improvident spending of money is worse than a cloistered lack of any experience whatever in spending it.

The term, "budget system," must not be taken to mean something formidable and complicated. Many a woman who never heard the word in her life runs her family by that system. Many a woman who would be quite overcome if asked to make a definite statement of the "general financial policy" of the family, has yet by a characteristically feminine directness of mind, a competent grasp on the financial situation. Such a one might very well be imagined as making the following statement: "Now, Peter, your father gets so much a year. We spend such and such proportions of that for housekeeping expenses, amusement, travel,

doctors, etc.; as you know from the family accounts. And you've seen that every year we spend about so much for you. We think you're old enough now to have that divided up into twelve parts, and have it as a monthly allowance. We want you to do with your own accounts as we do with the family matters: before you spend a cent make an estimate as to how much you'll need to spend for the bare necessities, and be sure that you have enough to buy clothes and shoes and school-books, before you spend anything on skates or candy."

The sooner the son of that woman has an allowance, the better for him. She has learned herself, and can teach him the principle of responsibility in expending money, which is forethought,—not spending anything without having a clear idea of its relation to the general proportion of other sums spent, and to the income expected.

But no optimist can claim that such a mother represents all of her sex. Women such as she need to go no further in this chapter. And yet there will be plenty of others who would do well to read on. Incredible as it seems, we are constantly being informed by investigators that there are many, many American mothers and wives who do not know the exact income they have to count on, and worse than this, who do not try to know because exact knowledge would mean a definite limitation to expendi-

ture. As in so many other phases of child-training, efforts directed upon the child alone are of no use unless accompanied by a reconstruction of the family life. Just as it is idle to expect to train a child to physical self-help when his mother's most violent exertion is to submit her body to massage, it is idle to try to train a child to financial self-reliance when his mother's system of expenditure is to buy as long as the money holds out, and complain when the supply runs low.

But where there is even an approach to rational methods in the home, allowances for children are excellent and reliable devices for training toward responsibility. Most financial irresponsibility does not come from downright dishonesty, but from a hazy and inaccurate idea about the purchasing power of money; and to look on at even the wisest spending of another's money will not drive home to the human mind the limitations of money, as will some actual experience in planning expenditures and apportioning an income. Continued experience with real cash and its exasperating habit of vanishing into dentists' bills and underwear instead of buying hats and theater tickets, is a great inculcator of reasonableness in this matter.

Another one of the many advantages of the allowance system is that it can not be well applied, indeed, will not work without a great deal of talk-

ing over and discussion of the abstract principles involved in each concrete case. And every rational occasion for talking over common interests is an opportunity added to the number all too few, in modern life, for intimate contact between child and parent. The parent should have the matter clear in his own mind before it is taken up, and be able to give a clear and logical exposition of the principles upon which any sane economic life is ordered. He should not only harp vigorously, as all parents delight in doing, upon the mere brute necessity of not spending more money than you have; he should also delight to show the various devices he himself has learned, for extracting from the money at your command, the greatest amount of satisfaction. And he should know how to marshal the army of satisfactions which have nothing to do with money at all. He should appeal to the sporting instinct for mastery of conditions, rather than repining at them, and should try to arouse a lively feeling of interest in the ingenuity developed by the struggle to harmonize one's desires and one's resources. The study of one's needs and desires and the attempt to gratify them by legitimate means is after all, taken in its best sense, the main occupation of our lives, and the sooner the child begins to be intelligently conscious of his needs and the cost of supplying them, the more skilfully will he later be able to dis-

pose of his resources so as to secure the best possible effect.

The parent should adhere honestly to the theory underlying the budget system: that is, to an attempt reasonably to estimate the needs beforehand, and to apportion money according to decisions taken after deliberate thought, rather than according to the fortuitous pressure of the moment. The settling of the amount of the allowance should therefore under no circumstances be arbitrarily assumed by the parent: "Now, I think ten dollars a month will about cover what you need." It must, on the contrary be undertaken in a prayerful spirit of scientific exactitude and should be based on exact information as to past expenditures for the child. It is well, indeed, to precede the giving of an allowance by a period of probation, during which the child, though not deciding the expenditures made for him, is required to keep an account of them as the data upon which his allowance will be based. This preliminary account-keeping, which may last three months or a year according to circumstances, is in itself an excellent experience for the child, arousing in him in most cases, the most naively astonished consciousness of the complexity of his needs,—a consciousness which comes in life to less well-prepared young people with a thunderclap of tragedy. Underwear, shoes, night-clothes, dentists'

bills, books, toys, travel—all the list which haunts the anxious dreams of modern parents, should be set down honestly and systematically. It is an education in itself for the average child of a comfortably well-to-do family to realize that stockings do not grow on bushes, and that even such tiresome things as rubbers must be paid for with the same variety of cash as is used for the purchase of roller-skates. After all the information is gathered and ordered, an estimate should be made by both parent and child jointly, as to the sum that will cover these multifarious needs. And then, as fast as possible, the child should be allowed the experience of really spending the money himself, or really deciding which are the more vital things for him.

Am I asked skeptically: "Would you calmly allow an eight-year-old girl to spend half a year's income on a set of furs?" No, of course not. An eight-year-old girl is too young to be given the responsibility for all the money expended for her. But she is by no means too young to have her attention called, as a regular thing, to the proportions kept in what is spent for her. She is not too young to go over regularly with her mother an itemized accounting of the money used for her needs. And a child who is made aware thus from early childhood of the necessity for harmony and suitability of expenditure, may safely be trusted at fourteen

not to spend an undue amount on non-essentials. The principle of the mother-may-I-go-out-to-swim jingle, applies to nothing more patly than to the spending of money. There is no way to learn how to spend money wisely except by spending it. And modern happiness depends to a notable degree upon the wise expenditure of money!

The one thing to be avoided, which vitiates the whole system, is the practise of doling out irregular additions to the allowance, under pressure from the child. If the allowance is not big enough to cover the items specified in the agreement, make it larger, or cut down the number of items, or make a definite advance to be repaid promptly out of the next month's allowance, or simply refuse more money, under no matter what temporary stress,—anything businesslike and regular. Do not, to gain a tranquil half-hour after dinner, fish out whatever bill happens to be on top in your pocket. The question of an allowance is a serious one, which affects much of the future happiness of the child and of those dependent on him, and it should be treated in a serious way, giving to the question of honest and wise money spending the dignity and worth to which its place in human life entitles it. The child's problems in spending money should be gravely and carefully weighed and discussed, trivial though they may seem. His facilely earning, facilely spending

father should rigorously repress the natural instinct to say to himself, "Great Scott, it's ten times more bother to figure that all out than to give the boy a dollar bill and have him happy," just as the modern mother is learning to repress her natural instinct to say, "Oh, it's so much more trouble to show the children how to dress themselves than to do it myself!" The principle at stake in the question of proportions to be spent on shoes as compared with baseball mitts, is one which may decide the success of a future business enterprise. And the principle at stake in the question as to the choice between patent-leather slippers and good books is almost certain to affect acutely the welfare of a family in the next generation.

The allowance is another step in the progress of making the child responsible for his own actions and his own life, and as such merits the most serious consideration. Financial problems loom large in the lives of most of us. And there are few financial problems which are not encountered in miniature with the spending of a child's allowance.

CHAPTER XII

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

MOST American families, if asked to testify, would raise up their voices in a heartfelt assertion that of all periods of childhood adolescence is the most troublesome, perplexing and exasperating to adults; and between boys and girls, the girls cause vastly more daily irritation in home life. The age-old and very wholesome tradition that the background of a girl's life is her home, means that her family are helplessly cognizant of every one of her whims and her fluctuations of feeling, her sudden dissatisfaction with what she has always liked, her fits of noisy high spirits and her unaccountable periods of black depression. This is hard on the family and hard on the girl.

Now it is an axiom that plenty of interesting occupation is one of the best remedies for all mental and moral ills; and experience shows that adolescent girls who, by some accident, are put in a position of more or less responsibility for the conduct of the family life escape a considerable amount of the chills and fever characteristic of their age.

Every one has known cases of girls of fifteen or sixteen placed in practical charge of the home by their mother's death, or the need for the mother to go out as a wage-earner, and every one must have remarked the thoughtful steadiness and patience which such girls show, not perhaps in comparison with adult women, but with their giggling, petulant, self-absorbed schoolmates.

Yet we all feel, and feel rightly, that a responsibility caused by such an upheaval in family life, is rather too extreme and sobering a burden to wish to impose upon every girl. The lesson of such cases is not one to be taken literally; but it is by no means to be disregarded by thoughtful parents when the inevitable friction between mother and growing daughter appears.

Like all relations between human beings, the relation between mother and growing-up daughter can not be discussed without going back to the nature of things, without at least a passing reference to all sorts of abstract considerations. So when the girl of fourteen, or sixteen or even twelve (according to her temperament) shooting up suddenly into tall maidenhood, begins to rebel at her position in the house, is no longer the cheerful child, ready to be feet and hands to her competent mother, it is well for that mother to put her competent wits to work upon a problem harder even than success-

ful housekeeping. She is not doing her duty by her suddenly unreasonable child, if she tries to insist that her daughter continue to occupy herself with the odds and ends of housekeeping, dusting and filling the flower-vases, or if she checks the sudden peevish and ungrateful criticism of family ways by a sternly repressive, "It has always been good enough for your father and me! I think *we* know what is the suitable way to furnish the parlor. What do you know, at fifteen, about setting the table compared to what my years of experience have taught me?" If she finds herself making, or tempted to make, such perfectly justifiable remarks, let her sit down for a long quiet questioning of her own heart. The time has come when not only the girl, but the mother, needs to get out of a groove too deeply worn, needs to make the terrible wrenching effort which it costs all human beings, to look over the top of their rut and contemplate the immensity of the blue sky.

The first thing of which it is well to remind herself is that everybody, even the sacred, much-sentimentalized-over mother of children, owes a duty to be as useful as possible to the world. During the tremendously absorbing childhood of her sons and daughters she has had a long security on that point. She has felt, and felt rightly, that she had been as useful as any one possibly could be. The danger

of her position is that she is too apt to acquire a set habit of so thinking which does not alter as circumstances alter. And the arrival of another woman in her house (for that and nothing else is the meaning of the arrival at adolescence of a daughter) is the very best occasion for her to meditate (while there is yet time) on the dreary fate of mothers and housekeepers who are nothing but mothers and housekeepers. Now is the moment for her to give the intricate machinery of family relations a dextrous turn, which engages the cogs of her life and her daughter's life in a firm new grip. Now is the time to have the wide vision and philosophic foresight which her daughter can not have, and which she needs vastly more than the exhortation to keep her hands off her mother's business.

The point which the mother should see is that it is her "business" only so long as it is necessary for the welfare of the family for her to do it. There is nothing sacred about housekeeping, and the resentment which the average woman feels when "her" home and "her" housekeeping are touched by her daughter's ideas and tastes is about as reasonable as that of a nurse who would resent the growing strength and energy of a recovered patient. Instead of clinging with embittered exasperation to every scrap of her home authority in details, the mother who looks far into the future

should welcome the opportunity to step a little outside the home which has absorbed her strength so jealously and by one and the same action leave more room inside the home for a personality growing stronger and obtain more freedom for the exercise of her own energy and ripe force, which also should have been growing stronger with the passage of the years. The daughter should not be the only one to grow in strength and desire to conquer obstacles and to achieve. As she grows into a larger place in the home, the mother should grow into a larger place in the community, from which she may look back (not with the wounded vanity felt by most home-bound mothers) but with a large, humorous tolerance, upon the changes and experiments, many of them futile and childish, of the daughter in the house.

Like all changes which involve growth, this should take place by slow and imperceptible degrees. On the girl's sixteenth birthday the mother should not say: "Well, since you do not like the way I run the house, I will leave it to you; and I will devote myself exclusively to promoting the betterment of the housing of the poor."

That sort of an exordium would be as bad as possible on all counts. In the first place, that is far too much responsibility to put upon a girl of sixteen, who should be giving a large share of her en-

ergy to acquiring her formal education. In the second place, the process should have been begun long before she reached sixteen. And third, most important of all, it betrays that irritation, that spirit of recrimination which the mother should never show, should never allow herself to feel toward that young woman who is her daughter. It is not the fault of the girl that she loses her old childish satisfaction with everything in her home. It is the emergence of that instinct for home-making about which in the abstract the mother is so prone to make sentimental remarks, but which she fiercely resents when it is directed to her home, which she considers already "made." The fact is that it is not her home (unless she is a very selfish and short-sighted woman). It is the background for family life, and as such the young girl has a right to have opinions about it. And furthermore the narrowness of her experience makes these matters vastly more vital to her than they should be to her mother, who with the passage of years, ought to have acquired an interest in larger matters. The mother who with a hurt tone in her voice wrangles with her fifteen-year-old daughter about the advisability of decorating the respectable family beefsteak with mashed-potato roses and a wreath of parsley is not much more than fifteen herself, in spite of her wrinkles and gray hair. If she has

occupied the years with growing as rapidly as her daughter has, she will say calmly: "Yes, many people do like it fixed that way. I've never had time to do it because I've always been so busy with you children. But if you want to start a window-box of parsley in the kitchen and learn to make the potato decorations from your domestic science teacher in school, I'll be very glad to turn over the preparation of the beefsteak to you as a regular thing. Only, of course, you must see that the beefsteak itself is properly cooked, too."

Such a course brings about several excellent results. The first is the acquiring by the child of the knowledge that household frills are not to be had by whistling. If she cares enough about the matter to raise the parsley and personally see to the preparation of the food, she will have added a valuable item to her home activities. If she finds the labor required seems to cost more than the result is worth she will have acquired a sense of proportion which will serve her well in her later life. In the first case the mother will find her labor lightened by one item, and in the second she will be gratified by a closer understanding between herself and her daughter due to their experience of the same phenomenon and their coming to the same decision in regard to it.

It is well in this whole matter of the gradual

change of relations between mothers and daughters, for the mother as the older and wiser to expect to take to herself the more generous rôle, to meet the girl a little more than half-way, to be considerably more indifferent to the question of her personal dignity (of which she is sure) than the girl can be about her own (which is such a new and untried possession). She should shield the girl's vanity from shock by permitting her from the first to work on her own responsibility, to have a complete section of the household activities given her, with which she may struggle unobserved by wounding adult advice or sympathy. She should not try to keep the adolescent in her old little-girl position of scullery-maid to her mother. It is better for her to take all the responsibility for one meal a week (Sunday evening supper as not absolutely essential to the family's health, is an excellent one to begin with) rather than to be expected to pare the potatoes for all the dinners. If she prepares the breakfasts for the family, she should not be expected to be responsible for any part of the other meals. In other words, between mother and daughter, as between most other human beings working together, friction is avoided by the simple expedient of avoiding too incessant contact; and the intelligent mother can utilize this new need to be out of the daughter's way by betaking herself more or less to activities outside the home, for

which in most cases she has already the beginnings of an interest.

The mother who is not too prickly as to externals can even very well afford to take to some extent in the home, the position of worker subordinate to her daughter. "Now, Margaret, you are sure from your high-school training in domestic science that you can run the house comfortably on less than I do. If you can, you're welcome to what you save. But of course you can't do all the work yourself, any more than I have since you've been a big girl. You tell me what part of the work you'd like to have me responsible for; and I'll see to that, and leave the managing to you." Is the mother who reads these lines appalled at her position under such conditions? If so, it is because she has kept her eyes so exclusively fixed on her housekeeping that she has forgotten that it is only a means to an end, and by no means an end in itself. If as she labored through the childhood of her little folks she has looked over the edge of the nest where all we mothers are so happy, she has seen plenty of other interests in the world to which she may turn when she is permitted to relax her concentration on home life. If at the first hint that she is no longer so absolutely necessary or so supreme inside the four walls of her home, she turns pale with indignant surprise and repels the idea hotly, it is because she knows sub-

consciously that she has allowed herself to become fit for nothing else than for the occupation which has now gone forever from her life,—the running of a home for the best interests of little children. And yet even in such cases, there is no need to repine, for there is scarcely a community in the country which would not benefit by organized care for those children, little and big, whose mothers are obliged to work away from them, in order to help support them.

This proposed gradual shifting of relative responsibility inside the home is complicated in many families by the presence of younger children or ease-loving adults, who do not fare so well under the inexperienced régime of the girl as with the mother, "broken in" as she is by years of acquaintanceship with the idiosyncrasies of that particular family. But there are, even here, decided advantages in a general shake-up of the home-staff. In the first place a general shake-up is always good for any staff which has been for many years monotonously stepping around and around the same treadmill. In this case it is sure not only to initiate the ambitious girl, little by little, into some of the real difficulties of homekeeping for a real family of varied interests; it not only forcibly detaches the home mother from a concentration on home ways which is almost sure to have become too intense for her own good; but it

furnishes to too comfortable adults the tonic experience that the heavens will not fall, though their coffee be not balanced on the exact spot between too strong and too weak, which happens to suit their tastes, and that after all they can continue to live and do their work, though no watchful hovering house-angel divines their chance whim for a particular chair in a particular spot.

As for the younger children, the ten- and twelve-year-olds, used to an imperious and instantly heeded voicing of their desires, it will do them no harm to encounter occasionally instead of the familiar downy softness of their brooding mother, the metallic sternness of youth like their own, with youth's unsentimental clairvoyance into the wiles and egoisms of other youth. Moreover, a moderate amount of responsibility for the happiness and welfare of younger children, if gradually taken on, might actually awaken some of the dormant maternal instinct in our handsome American girls, the existence of which we so poetically assume, but which manifests itself with startling infrequency in the average self-centered young lady whose only serious concern in life has been to pass her examinations in school. Lastly, the mother, submitting with laughing grace to the new rules, may find that in her new temporary rôle of equal, and comrade, and humorous co-rebel,

she is nearer to the younger children than in her traditional position of autocrat and law-giver.

Nobody can claim that such an experience will be the calmest and most tranquil passage in the life-journey of a family; but there is such a thing as having too long and too unbroken calmness and tranquillity. There may be less soothing regularity, but there will also be more laughter and more intimate acquaintanceship. The house mother who for years has fostered and cherished an atmosphere of regularity and unbroken comfort, may be surprised to find that it has developed into sultry stagnation, and that the inhabitants of her home may greatly thrive and flourish under the stirring challenge of the west wind of change and variety.

CHAPTER XIII

MODERN PARENTS AND THE SCHOOLS

SO far, this book has been concerned solely with individual effort, with the attempt to influence the child in his own home, where we parents are accustomed to look for him, and to deal with him. But observant parents will not be surprised to find many pages of a book even for parents, given over to the child in school. They will not be surprised because observant parents are becoming aware that the amount of traditional home life is diminishing as rapidly for the child as for the adult. They are becoming aware that to set one's own house in order is not enough in educational matters any more than in sanitary affairs.

There is, perhaps, no one element in a modern parent's life that is newer than the dawn of his scared unprepared feeling of personal responsibility for the school system. Here is something that vitally affects the welfare of his children, and about which he ought to have an intelligent opinion. But how can he have an intelligent opinion on a subject that perplexes professional experts to the point of

hair-pulling? And yet, when he considers the incalculable influence that the modern school has on his own children, he is profoundly penetrated with the need for parents as well as for experts and specialists, around the educational council chamber.

There has not always been this need. In the days when the school assumed nothing but formal academic instruction in the three R's, parents felt, with justice, that their advice was neither wanted nor needed by school authorities. We took care of all the multifarious phases of the child's existence summed up in the expression, "his home life," and with tranquil minds left questions of geography and long division to his teachers. As far as those subjects go, there is even less than ever any need for our amateur attitude. I doubt if our unprofessional ideas about the method of attacking arithmetic in the third grade will ever be a beacon light to any teachers. But nowadays the school is gradually taking over a study about which the ideas of a parent have per se, aptness and weight. This other subject, which the school never used directly to touch, and which the home always cared for as a matter of course, is character-building. Some of that must nowadays be accomplished in school or not be accomplished at all. Somehow, insensibly, there has come a change upon home life which makes it increasingly hard for children to acquire there, and there only, as

they formerly did, the necessary lessons in independence of character, industry, integrity of reasoning, initiative, helpfulness, endurance. The children are not in their homes for long enough periods of time; and when it comes to that, neither are we parents! The homes are not the same. The paraphernalia is lacking for teaching those subjects, so much more important (with all respect to teachers) than any instruction in the rules for computing interest.

Now, all this means that parents have no longer an excuse for not concerning themselves with schools; that teachers can not forego the active cooperation that formerly was not necessary; that a book addressed to parents must have a great deal in it about schools and their relations to modern life. There are innumerable indications that Americans are, as a whole, beginning to feel that something of immense importance is involved in the question of adjusting modern life so that children may not be forced by its conditions into spineless inertia. Hung over the fiery conviction that modern schools do not adequately meet this problem, the educational pot boils fiercely and casts up a great steam of new ideas. Educators everywhere in the country are realizing with dismay that a changed organization of society means a vital change in the relation of children to life; and if we fathers and mothers are not to be left behind, we also must

face honestly and struggle mightily with the problem.

I know that most of my readers will give a bored groan to have me trot out the old, old war-horse of the transformation of the home under the conditions of a highly organized industrial society. But it must be done, because from that and from nothing else comes the whole of our problem. When the mother of a family carded and spun the wool and wove the cloth to clothe the family; when she salted down pork for the winter use, and dried apples and pumpkins, and made soft soap, and knit the stockings, and did all the cooking and sewing, the question of self-help for her daughters solved itself. They were constantly in the presence of tangible industry in which their help was valuable and necessary. By the mere process of growing up in such a home they learned perforce the habits of steady industry, the competent capacity to overcome obstacles, the unsurprised acceptance of the necessity for work, which enabled them to take over the care of a home of their own with practised ease. When the father farmed his own land, or had his cobbling shop in one room of the home, or his small printing establishment near by, or his carpenter shop in the barn, or his blacksmith shop across the street, and when in addition to his daily toil at his perfectly visible means of livelihood, he expected to have a sizable garden to help

out the family diet, to patch the roof and repair doors and tinker leaking panes, and help in the autumn butchering, then the sons of the family were more ingenious even than most boys if they managed to escape a liberal education in handwork. Everybody worked—openly, patiently, steadily labored to keep the family going. There were jobs suited to the capacity of children of every age, tasks performed not in dreary solitude, but companionably side by side with the father and mother, tasks which visibly and actually benefited the family life, and which were, even to a child's eye, draped in the dignity of the essential.

And then there came factories to perform with more competence and less cost most of the manufacturing processes of the home; there came the organization of industry into minute subdivisions. The father was drawn out of the home by this current. Various paid specialists to take his place sprang into being, hirelings who came to the home to do the mending and care-taking which he used to do, men who know nothing and care nothing about the life of the home they enter, plumbers, painters, glaziers, paper-hangers, etc., who do their work like machines and depart forever. And finally organized industry laid its mighty grasp on the work of the women in the home, and snatched their useful occupations out of their hands with a completeness

too familiar to need describing here. All this is a thrice-told tale, but it is doubtful if most parents have as yet fully taken in the absolute change it has caused in the life of modern children. Men and women in the ordinary walks of life have been too frantically busy adjusting themselves to these altered conditions to have time for a thoughtful, sustained inquiry into the lot of their children. Women especially, caught unawares, have cried out in dismay at their empty hands; have caught wildly at what small scraps of usefulness were still possible under what remains of the old system, but have not as a class realized that the tidal wave of organized industry has left their little daughters and sons stranded as high as they. They have gone forward mechanically, trying to bring up the children as of old, fumbling vainly for the old occupations that are gone, and seeing no substitutes for the training that can not be recalled from the past. Some have clung with stubborn persistence to the outgrown shell of the old methods, have taught their little girls how to do fine hand-needlework on patchwork quilts, have insisted that their little boys shall do "chores" even if the chores have to be artificially manufactured with despairing ingenuity. Other women cooking by gas or electricity have seen the futility of expecting to teach their boys to be industrious by having them split kindlings, but not hit-

ting upon anything else for them to do, have abandoned them to the public schools and the streets, hoping with the invincible American faith in the former that somehow the schools will solve the problem.

For a time the schools showed no realization that there was a problem for them to solve. They had been established in America at a period when the children were taught at home all they needed to know with the exception of actual "book-learning," when the school was expected to provide for the child's knowledge of the three R's and needed to do no more. Secure in its confidence in the home, public education as it learned how to administer the three R's more expeditiously than at first, gradually added various branches of learning, colloquially known as "frills," a bit of designing, free-hand drawing, singing, and later, perhaps with a premonition of the gathering storm, it began to provide classes in wood-working and general "manual training." The external fabric of public education had never presented a more imposing, glittering front of costly success than when the bomb exploded. The discovery was made simultaneously in many parts of the country that somehow the real aim of education was being missed. Somehow the children fell between the two stools of the system and the home. They were being physically very well cared for at

home, better than ever before; and they were being taught more at school than children had ever learned before. But neither at home nor at school were they being prepared for actual life. When the time came for them to stop "being educated" they did not push off into the current of adult existence with the strong practised stroke of a trained swimmer. They fell into it with a frightened splash and, choking and gasping, struggled madly to keep their heads above an element entirely new in their experience. A great many times (humanity is a tough nut) they learned the stroke before it was too late, but other times (a tragically large number of times) they were so exhausted by the struggle with realities that the current washed them ashore, broken and enfeebled derelicts.

What especially struck those first observing this phenomenon was the fact that so-called education seemed to have little enough to do with success in the life struggle. Not a few college graduates drift into dishwashing as a means of support, and a not inconsiderable number of very useful and influential citizens never heard of the binominal theorem. The airing of these facts, and a great many more of the same import, gave rise to an outcry that still continues and is more energetic than edifying or profitable. The schools reproach the home with failing to provide the training traditionally sup-

posed to be furnished there; and the homes shout back at the schools, "What are *you* for? Don't we pay our school taxes? Why don't you do your share and be responsible for the children?"

Since the world of professional education is much smaller and more compact than that of parents, and also (we parents might as well admit it) much more alert-minded and less inertly given to accepting conditions as they are, it is among professional educators that the first attempt is being made to see what the situation is, and really cope with it. Having paid this tribute to educators, it is only fair to add that such open-minded, flexible-witted specimens of their class are a scattering minority, and that even parents themselves, halting and unintelligent as we confess ourselves to be, are no worse than the great mass of teachers, who go on turning the crank of the educational machine and resenting all references to the very patent fact that what they turn out is not what is needed by the world. Here and there a teacher of rare insight and clear vision sees how much good human material is being wasted, and striking out with originality and force, casts a light down a new path. The Association for Progressive Education, beginning in a small way, has met with the most eager welcome. The leaven is working rapidly in the whole lump. Scattered about in many parts of the United States are various ex-

perimental schools that are working out new methods. The much-talked-of school at Fairhope, Alabama, is one of these that has fortunately attracted a good deal of public attention (the more public attention the better in the case of improved methods), and there are others—more of them than the general public realizes. The uneasy interest in Garyism felt by most big cities shows that large centers of population are beginning to doubt the efficacy of handsome buildings and elaborate equipments as sole means of education.

Finally, here and there, some groups of Americans, anxiously seeking the way out, are trying the experiment of training children directly for the trades or professions they may perhaps enter as adults. This latter device, under its strictest form, has recommended itself to the German temperament as the best means of bringing reality into the education of children and bridging over the gap between their school-life and their grown-up life. It has undeniable advantages in the way of efficiency in disposing of a nation's population. If you train a boy to know little beyond the plumber's trade, the chances are that he will not disturb the equilibrium of the commonwealth by shifting from one occupation to another. But the national spirit of America looks askance at this rule-of-thumb method for bringing children into real life, and instinctively be-

gins maneuvering for more elbow room, for the amplitude of choice, the flexibility of organization which has been the distinguishing mark of American existence. This protest may be unavailing. Trade schools may be our fate in the end; our daughters may be forced at twelve to decide whether they will be dressmakers or cooks, and our sons between being carpenters or engineers. The steam-pressure of economic necessity may force us to submit perforce to their missing the fine tastes and mellow appreciations which come with an ampler, less rigidly purposeful training. But most American parents are little inclined to help this process along; and dissatisfied as they are with the present system, are by no means eager to hurry the nation into trade schools.

But if not trade schools, what then? We all feel that the school must do more than it ever has done to fit the child for real life, must (since the home is less and less influential) devise some means to bring the child into harmony with the modern conditions into which he is born, must somehow manage to rouse in him those qualities of responsibility, initiative and purposeful energy which the old home life developed. We parents need not expect that it will do all this. It can never do all of this in the collective atmosphere of a school. Every child is and always will be an individual human being, with many

individual needs and possibilities which must be cared for and brought out by his own father and mother, and much of this book has been taken up with attempts to simplify the problem of self-reliance in child life from the parents' point of view and with regard to the resources of modern homes. But every child is also a gregarious being, with a great many traits which are to be found in every other child, and which are best cared for and developed in community life, traits which the schools must learn to encourage to the fullest development. So that a large part of the problem for parents is the providing of the right kind of school for their children one which does not only teach the three R's, as it used to, but which definitely takes over some of the training in initiative and responsibility which used to be done in the home.

I think all of us are convinced that the signs of the times point to a more or less liberal "vocational" school as the best solution of our problems, and that we non-professional parents must trust experts to settle the exact extent to which the traditional bookish education ought to be supplanted by training for motor-minded children who would never under any circumstances succeed in the professions. That is a question that must receive widely diverse answers, varying according to the conditions of the populations involved. Our attitude toward the tech-

nical points in such a discussion must be, perforce, the rather anxious but quite helpless expectancy in which we wait while doctors debate the question of whether it is necessary absolutely to isolate scarlet-fever patients, or whether it is sufficient closely to screen the bed of the patient. We can not pretend to know about the data upon which the decisions of experts, either medical or pedagogical, are based.

But we can and should remember that we, and not the experts, are responsible for the general health of the children, and that general health, both physical and educational, is based on no obscure and disputed data, but on very well-known general laws that are quite simple enough for any amateur parent to understand. Indeed it is generally acknowledged that general practitioners, who follow laws based on good sense and experience of life, are not infrequently of use in correcting the vision of experts whose eyes are too exclusively fixed on their own specialties. We may know little about scarlet fever, but have a more realizing sense of the need for cheer and moral sunshine in a child's life, than his very intelligent physician. We shall probably be of little help in making the delicate educational adjustments necessary to bring the school into touch with modern industrial society; but just because children are so vividly present to our eyes as individuals, we may be of help by insisting on the need to treat each

child as a personality, to give him elbow-room and breathing-space, in general to treat him as a human being, rather than a cog in even the most efficient of educational machines.

It is an excellent thing to make sure that a boy with a taste for machinery does not get shoved by life into an accountant's chair; but it is of importance also that the process of inserting him neatly into a suitable place in society should not be accompanied with a weakening of his fiber, with a loss of the traditionally American quality of self-reliance. Here is a danger that parents ex officio can help combat, because in the nature of things they deal with children as individuals, rather than as a mass.

At this point I think I can do no better than to stop the discussion of the right kind of school in the abstract, and to describe an actually existing school which meets in a simple and practical way many of the difficulties besetting the average modern school in the average, normal American community. To those struggling with complicated problems, there is no greater stimulant than to know of others, similarly situated, who have conquered, and although conditions vary so that solutions must vary also, the existence and success of a school that takes cognizance intelligently of the new home conditions, must hearten and encourage every teacher and parent.

CHAPTER XIV

AN OUTDOOR SCHOOL (THE PARK SCHOOL, BUFFALO, NEW YORK)

SOME wise man has said that the date of a man's life depends not on the calendar, but on the geographical position of his home. There are in remote parts of India tribes who still dwell in the Stone Age, and everybody knows one or more philosophers in Paris, or New York, or London, who live about A. D. 2015. In my own case, living on a side road on the flank of a mountain in Vermont, it goes without saying that I am living about fifty years ago. We do things for ourselves. That is the mark of a bygone generation.

When we want roast chicken, for instance, we do not sit down at a table and order roast chicken. We go out after dark, select our fowl, cut its head off, pluck it, dress it and in due time roast it. Bread for us means procuring the yeast, the flour, the salt and the water, and combining these ingredients in the right proportions. We buy our milk from a neighbor. We fetch it home ourselves, and we are intimately cognizant of the source of it. If the cow

is indisposed, we go without milk for a few days, and we aid our neighbor in the strenuous undertaking of giving the cow the inevitable linseed oil. We plow and harrow our own garden, sow and water and weed it, and when the vegetables are ready we pull or cut them ourselves, wash and prepare and cook them. If we did not do these things we would go without vegetables.

Like the other inhabitants of 1855 or thereabouts, we read for the most part serious books. Not long ago I was perusing several extremely serious books relating to the practicability, or lack of it, of Socialism, of communized effort as a basis of human life when carried on in detail. Each author had a different opinion, not only about the desirability of this principle of organization, but about its possibility. While I was conscientiously trying to weigh their different arguments pro and con, I was called away from home to look over an open-air school, said to be a very modern school—indeed, the most modern of schools. I took the night train from home, spent the night comfortably asleep in that magic carpet, the sleeping car, and woke up five hundred miles and about a hundred years from home. For in that first half-hour of fresh vision, when one looks at a new thing and really sees it, I perceived that my various authors were discussing the feasibility of a condition that had unobtrusively arrived under

their very noses. And everybody else was so used to it that it had passed unnoticed.

I took a big street-car—an enormous, formidable structure it seemed to me, used as I was in my youth to going out to hitch up the horse before getting to town. This was soon filled with plainly dressed people (it was early in the morning), who absent-mindedly dropped a five-cent piece in a little machine and who, with equal negligence, pushed a button when they wanted the great machine to stop. They were so accustomed to the use of this huge common carrier that it was as wholly theirs as ever the family horse had been their father's. To use it was as automatic as pulling on the right rein to go to the right. As I looked out of the windows and saw the big city waking up for the day, I saw a hundred other instances of this automatic acceptance of what is still being argued about in books. All over the city white-uniformed men drove white carts up one street and down another. At each house they stopped, took out one or two loaves of bread and left them in the kitchen. The women in those kitchens received this manna from Heaven without a blink. They had, so to speak, pressed a button and bread ensued. They know no more about yeast than I know about a spinning-wheel. And mixed in with these white carts drove other white carts laden with bottles of milk, received by those same housekeepers

with the same obliviousness of the processes by which milk is secured. No personal acquaintance with the vagaries of a cow there, no rejoicing over the arrival of a calf. They had dropped a nickel in the slot (that is, they had telephoned to a milk company to supply them with milk) and from that moment to the end of their lives they need never give the matter another thought, beyond earning the money to pay for it. Everything reduced itself to that. If you had enough nickels to drop you could extract anything you pleased from the slot. Vegetable carts, meat wagons, everything was at hand, and laundry wagons whisked away the soiled clothes and brought back clean ones. Nor need these moderns give any thought to the problems of sewing. Another slot was provided for that. We passed block after block of show-windows displaying every possible variety of ready-made clothes that could be desired by any possible woman. All that was needed was an ample enough supply of nickels.

I fell to wondering what they *did* do with their time, these people who never had to think of yeast, or thread, or the right diet for chickens, or which is the best soap for washing clothes. As far as I could judge from the scraps of conversation I overheard on the street-cars, in the shops, on the streets, they thought chiefly of how to make the money to oil all this vast machinery. That was natural enough,

I thought, seeing how vastly important money was to them, and their faces looked so like other people's, like faces of 1850 (or, for that matter, like faces of 1550, judging from contemporary portraits); they looked, in short, so remarkably like everybody else that I saw no reason to fear that the new system was especially bad for the human organism.

But at once I asked myself uneasily, how about the children? Until they are of age to begin to earn the nickels which thereafter they spend their lives pushing into slots, what can they do that is their very own in this new world of getting and spending money? In an existence totally separated from all close connection with the vital processes of life, how can the child ever learn anything about the real nature of things? One of these adults, brought up under the old system, knows perfectly well (although he may have forgotten it for practical purposes) that bread does not grow in loaves done up in waxed paper. But how can a child who sees nothing but the button pressed and the desired object produced ever come to close enough grips with real processes to know where he is in the world, what kind of a world it is, what the nature of things is? How can he strike his tap-root deep enough into the subsoil of actuality to sustain him all through the droughts and storms of complicated modern life? His father

is for the most part invisible, making money. His mother is busy spending it as conscientiously as she knows how. Neither of those processes can be well shared by a child. His home is as full of buttons to be pressed as his father's money can buy and his mother's ingenuity can devise. Was it, I wondered uneasily, a very good form of activity for the child to do nothing but to press them, and passively to accept the resultant phenomena? And yet in all this world of infinitely subdivided effort, what high lookout place could there be where children could see things in a true perspective?

Then I came to the school and saw that these prodigious moderns had thought even of that contingency. In this very latest thing in schools a lookout place has been provided. I stared at that place for some time before I suddenly recognized what an old friend it was, although each detail as it drew my attention in turn had a familiar look.

I saw first of all a big plot of ground, grassed deeply, shaded by fine old trees with a number of picturesque, smallish, dark-green, open, shed-like buildings, clustered near a large old-fashioned house. Through the gate in the fence streamed a procession of children—some who had come in automobiles, and others again on the two standing feet of them, as the Celtic phrase goes. All of these children had one trait in common. Without exception they all

turned in at the gate eagerly and hurried along from the street into the big screen enclosure. Mostly they skipped and jumped as they arrived, although some were too intent on their purpose for that. They ran about like children who return home from a visit and who take up the familiar occupations with spontaneous zest. One little boy squatted for a prolonged, patient inspection of a small plot of ground fenced around with stakes. "It's my garden," he explained to me. "I was in a hurry to get here to see if the seeds have come up yet."

"When did you plant them?" I asked.

"Yesterday," he said, almost applying his eye to the ground in his hopeful search.

I left him to see what the elegantly attired twelve-year-old just out of a costly limousine wanted so much to do that she must run at breakneck speed down the path into one of the bungalows. What she wanted so much to do was to snatch a broom and with it to sweep off the catkins fallen from a birch tree on the walk. Out in the middle of the grassy plot a mixed crowd of boys and girls played ball. Near me two eight-year-olds strove with a burning-glass to concentrate sunlight enough to set fire to a pile of fluff. Beyond them, grave and intent, a little girl—a very, very little girl—tied a white oilcloth apron over a beautiful smocked dress and, sitting on her heels, began to daub green stain on a chicken-

coop. The coop looked as though the child herself had constructed it. It sheltered a biddy and a brood of chicks. The little girl painted on, oblivious of the screaming fun of a tag-playing crowd of children near her. She chewed her tongue earnestly as she labored. Her expression was of entire and unalloyed bliss. Her hat fell off unnoticed, and I remarked that it came from New York, from a very expensive importer's on Fifth Avenue. The little girl went on in silent ecstasy daubing green stain on the rough slats of the chicken-coop.

I tucked all these heterogeneous facts away in my memory, meaning to try later to arrange them so that I could make some sense out of them. They vaguely suggested something to my mind.

But there was too much going on then to philosophize. More children arriving in cars or hand in hand with fathers and mothers, gave these parents a hasty peck and hastened down the walk with that same air of arriving at the center of things. There rose from the scattered assembly that free roar of chatter and laughter and shouting which delights the ear of a child-lover and to an imaginative eye hangs above a crowd of happy children like a shimmering aroma of vitality.

Then a big gong sounded, and I followed the children into a large sunny room, with a fireplace and a piano. It looked like the living-room of a home

with enough chairs set to accommodate an extra number of children. The children sat down in rows and took up hymn-books. This was evidently to be the "opening exercises." I watched them with interest, a little sardonic, having heard that it was becoming increasingly difficult to devise "devotional exercises" which would not offend one or another of these twentieth-century dwellers, bickering about the degrees of a faith which means little to any of them. Also I watched for the inevitable bored and herded expression which children always assume on such occasions. So far there was none of it. They sang a hymn very heartily, the little, little ones shouting lustily and tunelessly after their delicious manner, wagging their heads in time to the strongly marked rhythm. The others sang quite in the middle of the note. And they really sang, all of them.

Then the principal stood up, companionably close, not on a platform, but directly in front of the littlest of all, who sat cross-legged on the floor. She asked for a volunteer to lead them. A little girl trotted forward immediately. She stood there before the roomful of children, quite without self-consciousness, opened her dewy child's lips and began, "The Lord is my shepherd." At once all the others, a hundred and fifty of them, caught her up and went on, "I shall not want." Their children's voices roll-

ing out those sonorous old phrases rang in my ears for many a day after that. The little leader went back to her place, and a little boy's hand shot up. He was beckoned forward and announced, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The others needed no more clue, and went on with him. "The world, and they that dwell therein." I caught the splendor of the words with an inexpressible pleasure. "Who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

Could there be, I wondered, a skeptic so bickering as not to feel his heart soar high to hear that age-old affirmation made again by those fresh souls? It now occurred to me why the children did not look bored and herded. It was because they themselves were conducting the devotional service. They were not passively submitting to exhortations from an adult, they themselves were actively taking the responsibility for the exercises. And so it continued to the end, when the principal bowed her head, and all the black, brown and flaxen heads bowed with her. The little, little boy sitting on the floor near her took hold of a fold of her skirt with his chubby hand and held it tightly, while everybody recited in unison the prayer to our Father which makes us brother of all mankind. At the end the little boy raised his head and gave his teacher a

radiant sudden smile, by the light of which I made out the answer to my question. That was the smile a child gives his mother.

And there was the meaning of it all. I took it in with a stinging of eyelids. This was his home. He ran away with all his might from the pleasant, charming house, well kept, abundantly furnished with buttons-to-be-pressed, which was all the twentieth century permitted his loving parents to give him; he ran away from that to his real home where there was plenty for him to do. It was not his parents' fault. Never have parents taken such anxious thought about their children's best interests as now. In fact, his mother was showing the finest and highest devotion to his best interests by giving him up thus to this other home, which could cope with the artificiality of modern conditions so much more successfully than she could single-handed.

With this key in my hand, everything else I saw there during a very momentous day of sightseeing was clear to me. The twentieth century has turned its back squarely on the old-fashioned home close to all the processes of actual life. That much I had seen on my way through the streets of the city. I knew, too, from those serious books I had been reading that the twentieth century was very uneasy about the effect of this new régime on the children, and that in a hundred different places and in a dozen

different ways fumbling attempts were being made to find something which would better fit the needs of children. But here was the completest answer to the new problem. And what was it? There in 1915, in an ultra-modern city, I stood in the midst of a home, where every process was open to the child's eye, where he took part in all that goes to make a home, where, above all, there was not a button to be pressed. And this home called itself the very latest thing in schools! With twentieth-century precision and accuracy it had analyzed the ideal of the old home and it had reconstructed everything in it of value to children.

Yet it was not a reaction, not an unimaginative literal return to the actual facts of an old-fashioned home, to processes now left behind forever. There was no attempt made to weave the cloth used, to cook over hearth-fires, to provide the fuel from the woods. This was a twentieth-century home—with all the modern apparatus; but a twentieth-century home for children. Somebody with clear vision had looked hard at the old home, had seen that its virtue resided not in the making of soft soap, or spinning of thread (which would be folly to do now), but in the fact that the children shared in whatever went on, and this new, new home had been constructed around that idea.

Then I really began to visit the place and to know

what I was seeing. I was not to be put off the track by any talk of modern pedagogics or special phonetic systems of teaching reading. Everybody nowadays has a special phonic system of teaching reading, and, as far as I can see, they all have about the same effect on the children. The secret of that school lay deeper. It lay deeper than the "entirely outdoors feature" of which I had heard so much. I had been rather suspicious about this. It sounded "faddy" to me to go to the trouble of keeping children outdoors in a northern zero climate, when the universal experience of the race is that it is more convenient to work indoors in warmed rooms; but I was disarmed at a blow by the principal when I put a cautious leading question to her: "Now, about this outdoor business? How important *is* it, anyhow?"

She answered calmly: "Oh, not so very. It's not the real point of my school at all. It's just a handier way to manage." And when I stared rather open-mouthed to have the wind taken out of my sails in this manner, she explained, patiently tolerant of my slowness of comprehension: "Why, it's so much more practical and feasible. The children are infinitely healthier because they are out-of-doors all the time, and they don't lose time from being at home sick. They're almost never absent from sickness. And since they never get nervously tired or tense, as they do indoors, they can accomplish much

more school work when they're here. Then it costs about a sixtieth part as much to run up a bungalow of rough lumber open on three sides as it does to build a carefully constructed modern school building and then instal a costly system of artificial ventilation and heating. It costs such a lot first to shut the air out and then to let it in again." As simple as Columbus' egg, I reflected a little breathlessly as she went on: "Our buildings don't cost so much as small hay-barns, and we find they serve their purpose better than the elaborate plate-glassed, hardwood-floored, polished modern schoolhouse. They cost a city nowadays almost as much to build and maintain as a hospital, you know."

Well, there was sense to that, I had to admit; but as I had thought this a school that catered to very well-to-do families, I was surprised at the emergence of the very un-American element of thrift. A further inquiry elicited the fact that the principal who has evolved this school out of her inner consciousness and the spirit of the times, did not consider it only as a school for those particular hundred and fifty children, but as an irrefutable proof of what might be arranged anywhere for any children, and (with the exception of the crowded districts of New York City, and a few other very large cities, which are exceptions to all rules) what might be arranged more easily, with less expense and time for material

preparation than the imposing glittering-windowed edifices for which Americans so devotedly give up so large a share of their taxes. It was an idea so new to me that it was startling, and so entirely feasible that even its newness could not prevent me from seeing visions of colonies of such schools, as the principal went on to explain her idea to me. We were watching a first-grade class in reading. They were sitting cross-legged on the floor, looking up from their books from time to time to watch a yellow-bird which flew in and out of the shed-like room gathering jute for her nest from a bit of raveled rope. "They don't need expensive apparatus," said this very modern educator-woman to me; "and they don't need anything complicated; the simpler things are the better. And simple things cost so much less! If the same amount of money—oh, much less!—as is now spent for coal, and janitor service, and sweeping halls, and oiling floors, and washing windows, and all the up-keep of a beautifully finished modern building, could be spent in giving the children more space, all the fresh air there is, natural surroundings, home-making processes in which they share, and better teachers——" She did not finish her sentence, but I looked around me, knew what she would say, and saw its truth.

Natural surroundings—there was the keynote of the matter. Given those, an enormous number of

problems of education solved themselves. The question of so-called "discipline," for instance, does not exist. The children "discipline" themselves, just as they do in any large, well-run family. In all that crowd of free active children there was not one who was not too busy and happy to waste time in quarreling. They helped run that school. Their own convictions seemed to be that if they did not, everything would fall to pieces. And how they throve in the divine responsibility for the common welfare!

They made their own bookshelves and waste-paper baskets, and stained them green. They had stained each new bungalow schoolroom as it was put up. They had arranged the apparatus in the gymnasium, they were laying out landscape gardener fashion a neglected corner of the grounds. When something broke or wore out, it did not vanish into thin air and return mended. The children themselves took counsel how it should be repaired, and then did the mending in their own shop. And the kitchen! That was a real kitchen, such as any of the little girls might have later on to work in, and not a domestic-science laboratory. The work that was done was set, like everything else in the school, in a true, sound and sincere relation to real life. The girls were making a bread-and-butter pudding that morning; not merely to learn how to make it, not merely in order to have it listlessly

tasted by each one, as in duty bound after all the bother of making it, but just as should always be the case where food is prepared, because some one wanted very much to eat it, because it was needed for the school lunch.

Up in the seventh-grade class in geography they were also, so to speak, making a pudding that should be eaten and not looked at. For they were not "bounding states" in the abstract, nor reciting purposelessly the products of Argentina. They were, to begin with, conducting the recitation themselves. The teacher, only visible after some search, was sitting at one of the desks, a silent, attentive note-taking spectator. The children were in charge. An eleven-year-old girl was facing the class and explaining, with occasional references to notes and time-tables, why, if she were going to San Francisco, she would take the Southern Pacific. She laid special stress on the interesting cities she would pass through, the possibility of stopping over at points of interest, with statements of exact cost and length of time, and the scenery she would see. The rest of the class listened in a silence that had a deceptive air of respect and conviction. The little girl's brief had been carefully composed. She talked fluently and well. I am free to confess that she made a deep impression on my ignorance of transcontinental routes. When she finished I was quite con-

vinced that the Southern Pacific was the route I would choose.

Not so with the little girl's classmates. One by one they rose up to question her, and out of full note-books and many-times consulted geographies and time-tables to combat her arguments. The first showed conclusively that the Northern Pacific was infinitely superior scenically, and showed such a knowledge of what would be observed along that route that I was quite abashed. Another was all for crossing Colorado and Utah, and supplied a great mass of accurate and thoughtfully compiled figures to explain her choice. I was called away in the midst of this energetic "recitation," in which the teacher was totally forgotten, and as I went I thought of all the middle-aged women I know who have never mastered the use of a railroad time-table, and who could no more sensibly choose a route for a railway journey and select the train to make the best connections than they could walk on their hands!

When lunch time came and we all sat down to plainly, daintily set tables, waited upon by members of the family (for by this time nothing could have convinced me that those hundred and fifty children were not all brothers and sisters), the bread-and-butter pudding was a main feature of the meal. It was excellent, and it was appreciated by those chil-

dren—who all knew its history—in a fashion most gratifying to the sixth-grade cooks. Being an enthusiastic cook myself, I could share their penetrating satisfaction, which nobody but a cook ever knows, as they heard the hearty clatter of silver on china as the spoons scraped the saucers for the last bit. Then a small girl near me jumped up on her chair and shouted, "Three cheers for the bread-and-butter pudding!" leading the ensuing hurrahs with her napkin, like an undergraduate cheer-leader. I should say that there would be no difficulty in keeping up an interest in cooking in that school.

After lunch everybody rested—as I thought nobody but a philosopher or a Neapolitan knew how to. The children wrapped themselves in blankets and sleeping-bags and lay flat on the floor, and the teachers did the same. For fifty minutes the world held its breath. I looked about me almost with awe to see all those American personalities submitting themselves voluntarily to the influence of meditative calm. Some of the children, especially the littler ones, fell soundly asleep, and several continued to sleep rosily and deeply long after the others had risen and were taking up their multifarious activities. The older boys and girls looked steadily up at the green-stained rafters of their school "rooms" or out at the sky. I wondered what they were thinking about. It occurred to me that probably their

fathers and mothers had never in all their lives given so long a time to quiet reflection. It also occurred to me that they were probably building a wall against nervous prostration and nervous indigestion and the other wild beasts which assail modern life.

After the rest hour was over everybody came back to life like an acrobat bounding into the center of the ring. I leaned from a window and, unobserved, watched a crowd of boys and girls struggling mightily with concrete—mixing it, pushing their hoes through the heavy mass, cracking stones like little roadmakers, bringing sand in wheelbarrows. They were constructing a concrete walk. And as I watched them labor till the honest drops stood on their foreheads, I heard a ghostly whisper in my ears—the whisper of innumerable parents who, all over the country, cry: "*We* can't get those children to do a single bit of work at home. In *my* days the boys did chores and the girls did——" The whisper died away as I realized that in a modern home practically no interesting, constructive work suitable for a child is left to do. There are only a few rags and tatters of meaningless drudgery, the fringe that has not yet been taken over by machinery. The fourth-graders I saw cleaning out their hen-house and carrying warmed water to their biddies had no objection to work *qua* work.

Only they need work which in their own phase they can see the sense of.

Do I hear an ironic question: "What has keeping hens to do with the multiplication table?" If I do I will lay it low with the bold answer: "It has everything in the world to do with the multiplication table!" If I have not specifically mentioned the methods of teaching reading and writing and spelling in this most modern of schools, it is because I have an ingrained skepticism as to the importance of differing methods for teaching those subjects. I have seen so many of them work equally well. I saw many and many classes of these outdoor children being instructed in all these subjects. They were excellent classes, making fine progress in book-learning; they were being taught very well, but no better than in a good many well-managed schools. And yet I was not at all surprised to hear that children going out from this school into other indoor, big-building schools are usually a year in advance of their contemporaries in all the regular branches of school studies. That is due, not to the technical excellence of their teaching, which is duplicated in many a conscientious modern school, but precisely to the tonic and exhilarating effect of concrete walks and keeping hens and making bread-and-butter puddings which meets with applause and, better than applause, with good appetites. It comes from a

steady diet of non-vitiated air, from frequent jumpings up and runnings about in outdoor air, from the sense of spaciousness and calm that outdoors brings with it; it comes from the poise and lack of strain that result from natural surroundings. Ah, other teachers, teach they ever so wisely, need not expect their charges to pass such good examination in long division as children who have measured the boards to make a fence around their own garden. Everything hangs together in this world!

And because everything hangs together, I have spent a good deal of time since I saw that embodiment of modern ideals for education in wondering what it really meant. What will it mean in the end? Does it mean that those children who grow up used to simple natural surroundings—in which a child's soul and mind are at home—will, as adults, so appreciate these blessings that they will insist that all schools shall be like theirs? Will they turn over their babies to a school-house where the almost lost art of an intimate relationship with life is preserved? Or will they go further still and reconstruct their own homes on that basis and keep their children with them? I don't know. Nobody knows. But though I don't know where the road leads, I do not fear, as I look back on those clear-faced, vital, vigorous children, to leave the future in their hands.

About fifteen years have passed since this description of the Park School in Buffalo was written. As far as I can see, the public schools still rise, everywhere, higher, bigger, more like handsome, expensive, impersonal office-buildings than ever. Taxpayers groan with martyr's pride and pain in telling how vast a sum was spent on the last big schoolhouse in their town. (No bragging ever audible about the amount of salaries paid to teachers.) On the other hand, all over the country are private, more or less experimental schools, all of them with scattered, smaller buildings, with plenty of space and sun and air and grass and trees and elbow-room.

I am far too inexpert an observer of our national spectacle to guess what this means. Is it the shudderingly resigned conviction of Americans that our children will be best prepared for the life before them if they pass their formative school years being marshalled about in platoons, moulded to the narrow restrictions of mass action, barred from any enterprise—almost from any thought—that is not collective?

Or will there be a slow change of conviction as in the care of orphans? Will perhaps the high, huge, factory-like school-building with its Sahara of a play-ground, gradually disappear from the American landscape, gone to join the now almost extinct, high, huge, factory-like orphan asylum?

CHAPTER XV

PARENTS IN THE SCHOOLS

TO read of such a school as has just been described must stir every parent to wistful regret that it is not a block away from his own home, and that his own children may not learn there that clear recognition of cause and effect, that sense of responsibility for the welfare of their group, which is increasingly difficult to teach them at home. Perhaps one of the best things we parents can do to assist in solving the problem of self-reliance for children is to turn part of our energies toward making over the schools until practical self-help is possible in them, toward transforming them from "institutions of learning" into "educational homes" for children.

Now this undertaking is one before which most American parents feel a shamefaced shyness, not entirely to their discredit nor entirely due to that much-harped-upon parental inertia which educators are never tired of casting up to us. It is true that as a rule we know far more about local politics than

about the condition of the school playground where our children spend many important hours, and more about the personality of our favorite baseball player or actress than about the personality of the woman who teaches our sons and daughters. But it is only fair to us to say that we concern ourselves so little with the schools largely because of the old American tradition of humble-mindedness before the sacred person of the School-Teacher. Who are we, to presume to lend our dubiously helpful hand to enterprises beyond our comprehension; as though we should presume to help the dentist to fill a tooth!

I reiterate that we will do well to keep to this attitude of mind as far as regards formal school studies. What is to be remembered is that we are now asking the schools not only to do our teaching for us, but to do some of our mothering and fathering, and it is perhaps not presumptious to think that mothers and fathers can be of some assistance in this later enterprise. But how? We look up at the great building, often the largest and most impressive in our town; we see our sons and daughters engulfed in the endless lines of marching children; we step in and are abashed by the great corridors, the succession of doors, all as like as the doors in a penitentiary, the marshaling of platoons and regiments of pupils, by the "offices," the formidable sound of the cogs of the great machine, all fitting

into one another and grinding irresistibly forward. What possible impression can be made on it from the outside by a mere parent? Who of us under such conditions has not undergone this experience of faintness of heart?

Let such a parent betake himself away from these too visible evidences of complication and elaborate mechanism into some quiet spot where he can again feel himself an individual and not an unconsidered ant in an ant-hill, and take counsed with him own heart. First of all let him bring to mind the well-known fact that half the race is won for the man who sees the goal clear before him, that he is already half-victorious who in the clangor and excitement of battle can remember definitely what he is fighting for. Then let him comfort himself by remembering that what he wants to do has nothing of extraordinary novelty or originality. He now realizes that he had thrown too many of the duties of his parenthood upon the teacher, and he proposes to take them back and do more of his share himself. What he wishes to do is to bring into the school existence of children some of the conditions traditionally belonging to the home, notably those which tend to develop initiative and spontaneous activity; and to suppress conditions traditionally belonging to the school which lead to passivity and to a submissive acceptance of conditions as they are. Or

to put it more briefly, he wants to make the children capable of "doing for themselves" by giving them the chance to "do for themselves." And, quickly, lest the recollection of the great brick and glass structure dwarf his courage, let him remember that he is not at all dreaming of trying totally to reconstruct the school system. He could not if he wanted to, and it is fortunate he can not. For total reconstruction is seldom wise. If people have slept all their lives with windows and doors tightly closed, the shock is too great if suddenly you force them to roll up in a blanket and sleep under the stars. No, you begin by opening one window a little way, then another, and then the door; and as they see that they are not killed, but quite the contrary, you eliminate the bad element of nervous apprehension on their part when you finally transfer them to a sleeping-porch. And likewise in the schools. We need not hope, or even wish, to turn the system away from its dusty paved streets into grassy and breezy meadows of natural homelike conditions all at once. It must come little by little; and for opening up a window here, and pulling up a shade there, an "amateur" like a parent is as good as a professional specialist and far less irritating to the body-politic of the school, which is a proverbially suspicious organism. Let us begin with the unexciting, eminently unsensational proposition that as the children go away

from us into schools we may be permitted to go into the schools after them. After all, we can scarcely be out of place in the spot which is for much of the day a home for our children. And let us see which is the most unobtrusive window for us to open, once we are there.

But all this does not start an imaginary parent along any practical path, does not give him even the end of a definite clue. Well, let him—no, not "him," for it will be almost certainly a mother who is thus taking counsel with herself—let us say, let *her* begin almost anywhere. What she wants to do since the children are out of the home so much, is to bring more of the home into the school. Let her select almost at random any element in home life. Ten to one, meal-time will rise to her mind, for much of the "home spirit" centers about the preparation and eating of meals. What can she do to help change the solitary munching out of pasteboard boxes of ready-made food into a function that shall have some home atmosphere wherein the children share in the responsibility for the preparation of the family food?

Let her not be deceived by appearances here; let her not turn away even if there is already a lunch-room run by a caterer as a business venture. It is not only warm food eaten at tables which she wants, it is an indefinable moral atmosphere of per-

sonality which she and her kind can bring into the school and which is beyond the most competent restaurant-keeper to achieve, which is even impossible for teachers to achieve, which is really a mother's job. But let us for purposes of illustration suppose that the school she contemplates is still in the lunch-box, pickle-and-pie-eating stage of development. There are plenty of those left, as everybody knows.

The great American institution known as the Woman's Club is perhaps the best tool at hand to begin with; and let us thank the kind Providence which has shaped it for our use. Let us suppose a Woman's Club deciding to forego the study of "Italian Renaissance Influence on English Sonnets," or even the Initiative and Referendum, and voting to give its activities for a year to the public schools in its neighborhood. After conferring together they make public the statement that they understand perfectly that it is too much to expect an overburdened teacher to add cooking to her cares, and it is perhaps too much to expect the school taxes to be swelled beyond their present always burdensome size. And yet there is Gary, pointing the way to improvements possible; there is the Park School with its wonderful lunch-room. There are hundreds of other schools struggling more or less successfully to introduce this new feature which has proved so desirable under a dozen aspects. What is wanted is to make

the schools more home-like. Why can not the home-makers help in this? Why can not the good housekeepers of the neighborhood help out until the matter can be arranged formally by the school authorities? Mrs. Robinson who lives two blocks from the schoolhouse, has planned her Mondays so that she can give two hours at noon to the older girls of the school. By relays, ten or more in a group, they can be excused from their school work at a quarter past eleven, or at any necessary hour. They are henceforth Mrs. Robinson's girls, always the same group on Mondays, the only day when they and she take command of the lunch proposition. They find Mrs. Robinson waiting for them with a carefully thought-out menu for the lunch. Divided again into groups of four or more, they prepare the food, macaroni in tomato sauce, or the baked potatoes and bread-and-butter pudding, or the custard, and bean soup; set the tables or arrange the cafeteria; and at twelve when the school is dismissed, they sell to their classmates for five or six or nine or eleven cents a nourishing savory lunch. If Mrs. Robinson's young lady daughters, languishing at home in boredom and wondering if they mightn't perhaps go in for settlement work or raising Belgian hares, would come over to the school on Mondays from twelve to one to move unobtrusively about the lunch-room, the table-manners of the chil-

dren would be improved and the young ladies' boredom sensibly diminished.

After her two hours of strenuous but highly interesting instruction were over, Mrs. Robinson could pin on her hat and go home, feeling that she is more an integral part of the life of the community than ever before. On Tuesday her neighbor, Mrs. Humphreys, another member of the Woman's Club, could take her place with another group of girls, and, having no grown-up daughters to help out at the noon-hour, could call on the childless Mrs. Packard to drop in to have an eye on how napkins are used, and to see that the inevitable and very desirable "good time" did not grow too noisy.

The very informality of all this, the "unprofessional" character of it is its chief value. Let those comfortable homekeepers, cooperating thus in their amateur way, beware lest the essence of their plan be destroyed by some energetic, too-competent one among them, or a "professional" from outside who, in order to save effort, to be more efficient, offers to "do the whole thing up at one time," gather *all* the girls together once a week and give them a demonstration lecture in a big hall. At the first suggestion of such a substitution of "mass activity" for individual contact let every woman rise up to defend her conviction. Those women are not giving themselves all that trouble merely to

teach the girls cooking. That might perhaps be better taught in a laboratory. They are not merely trying to provide a warm and digestible lunch for the school children, something which a caterer might manage more efficiently. What they are up to is an attempt to bring the human element into the schools, to banish for an hour or so the impersonal abstract, to give the children a share in the life of their group and to make them *feel*, warmly and emotionally feel the importance of their doing that share. These club women are trying hard to protect the children against the deadening effect of "mass" life, which dulls and stupefies the nascent individual and initiatory faculties. They are trying to break up the great formidable, unhuman bulk of the school population into small manageable groups with some natural reason for acting together; they are trying to reintroduce into school life some of the elements of spontaneous action and individual initiative which were engendered in the old family feeling of responsibility for the conduct of the group life.

In any one of the numberless American villages, towns and cities which are still small enough for people to "know one another" as the pregnant phrase runs, this plan could be carried out by any woman's club, with a minimum of formal organization committees, secretaries and the like. It can be kept

what it is in reality, an affair of neighborliness, of wholesome and natural cooperation between families living near one another.

I am well aware that before now any reader who is familiar with the barren interior of an American school building is crying out upon me: "But where, pray, in that swept and garnished sterility could one put all the comfortable and shining paraphernalia for the gracious act of preparing food? And even if there were a place, where would the pots and pans, and stoves and dishes come from?" These questions are not so difficult to answer as they sound, if one has but the courage of his convictions. Since the less essential should always give way to the greater, it might be well worth while if there is absolutely no vacant floor space possible in attic, basement, or store-room, to sacrifice the echoing vacancy of a hall or entrance way. What if it does look cluttered? It is a good clutter, that means real life brought into the school. And nowadays, that kitchenette furnishing has had so much ingenuity lavished upon it, the compact modern apparatus for actual cooking can be put into an incredibly small place. Oil and gas stoves take up little room; light folding tables and chairs can be used and can be set up against the wall at the end of the meal. One chest of deep drawers and shelves against an end wall will hold all the paper napkins,

cutlery and dishes needed. And the spectacle of this comfortable outfit, brightening with its homely cheer a school corridor, would make the children's guardian angels sing for joy!

The question of where to put the apparatus having been disposed of, let us turn to the other poser, how to secure it. There is much to be said on this score, and most of it is cheerful. There are few towns of moderate size where the merchants if reasonably approached will not be found surprisingly ready to help. Our splendid national tradition of interest and pride in the schools is an almost inexhaustible bank on which to draw. If the owner of the stove-store of a town has the advantages of the plan explained to him and in addition is made to see the possibilities for some legitimate advertising, the chances are large that he will agree to furnish one or more oil stoves. If the town has gas, the gas company will do the same. In some remote rural districts, the Standard Oil Company has already inaugurated the policy of furnishing an oil stove to any school that will organize cooking classes. Dishes for cooking can be procured in the same way and supplemented by an occasional gift from a private kitchen. The folding tables will probably have to be bought, but almost certainly at wholesale rates if their purpose is explained. And there could be no more wholesome experience for the

girls of the schools than to take counsel with their parents and elders concerning the organizing and furnishing of the school kitchen. It would be good for their arithmetic, for their future homes, for their very souls, to find themselves although still in the school building, occupied in an undertaking which is really essential to life. And once it is established, their arithmetic, their future homes and their souls would continue to profit by the exercise of calculating the food needed, and the cost of it, of marketing for it, and preparing it and serving it, and clearing up after a meal. To have once a week such contact with reality and some of its laws, would be as tonic and invigorating an experience for a little girl, as assuming the care of her own home is for the young woman. And the little girl would have the immense advantage of taking under expert guidance that momentous first step away from theoretical studies into actual life. If each group of girls undertakes this one day a week, or even (if the number is very great) one day a fortnight, the accumulation of knowledge and experience at the end of a school year will be incalculable. It is even possible that the club women who guide them may themselves find the experience stimulating and suggestive. It is certain that they will be brought into closer relations with a group of their young fellow-citizens; a relation that will be

thought-provoking for the older women and richly influential in the girls' lives.

If some factor in the organization of the school positively forbids such activity as that outlined above, our club women can always fall back on the "Crete idea" as educators call it, after the town in Nebraska where energetic and public-spirited matrons originated it. There the group of girls, always kept small and manageable so that the personal element is emphasized, is taken once a week into the home of their adoptive mother-teacher and there have the experience of well-regulated activity in some home industry. They may cook their own supper and that of the family of their hostess, or in season they may put up preserves and jelly to present at cost to those in charge of the school-lunch. Working together like sisters under their mother's eye, they may thoroughly clean and set in order a room, and learn to their astonishment how varied and interesting are the processes involved.

For the purposes of illustration we have followed in detail what might happen if an imaginary mother had chanced to think of meal-time as a potent element in home life. But this has been developed so elaborately merely as an example. Suppose she is the kind of woman who sews with pleasure and hates cooking. She might then very naturally, in running over home scenes, no longer existing in

the home, not yet introduced into the schools, have thought of the pleasant hours of talk in a well-furnished sewing-room, where mothers and daughters are drawn together by effort-in-common as nothing else can draw them. Let her remember at once as did the cooking-club woman that her purpose is not merely to teach the girls to sew, but to bring into their school life *by means of sewing,* some of the old home qualities of individual responsibility and initiative, and let her lay her plans and organize her campaign accordingly. It would be wearisome, of course, to continue outlining in detail the various approaches to the problem. Ingenious American women can be trusted to fit the means to the end, once their attention is called to the need for action. In the case of the sewing enthusiast she might, if the school is rather primitive and no sewing is taught in it, give actual instruction, not so much in the construction of garments which in these ready-made days are so easily bought, but in the up-keep of a woman's costume, the endless little matters which most girls learn to do painfully and in the most back-handed manner. She should show them how to mend, and darn, and sew on buttons, and baste in fine neck-wear, and reinforce, and forestall breaks and tears.

Of if sewing is already formally taught in the school, she can gather her group of girls around her

once a week in some enterprise connected with school life. They can prepare the linen necessary for the school lunch-room, or they can make the costumes for the seventh-grade dramatics, or they can make a set of stenciled curtains for the school-room windows. (If they are so arranged as not to shut out light, there is, I dare say, no law which forbids to schoolrooms the softening effect of pretty washable curtains, an effect we none of us would forego in our homes.)

Now, let us leave to our own devices the various other kinds of club women, the woman who neither sews nor cooks with pleasure, but delights in shows and pageants and entertainments; the woman who loves outdoors; the woman who loves babies; the woman who has a genius for social settlement work, and all the rest. They can be trusted to invent ways to use their own special capacities as keys to unlock for groups of school-girls the door to the domain of individual effort and responsibility. Let us turn now from them to their husbands and older sons who, we may suppose by this time, aroused by all this talk of helping girls to self-reliance, have looked up over their newspapers of an evening and inquired, "But what about the boys?"

Well, how about the boys? Their case is different from that of their sisters. No two girls are going to have identical futures, but they will almost

all be somewhat concerned with certain basic home-making processes, such as cooking and sewing; and these they may well begin to practise in childhood. But the boys will enter many diverse occupations with hardly anything in common except that each has for its purpose the making of money and for their varied specialized futures no handcraft which they can master at school promises to have practical value. But boys, as well as girls, have to be prepared for a world where desirable objects are earned by work, where obligations have to be met, where effort in common is the prerequisite of success. Therefore when the fathers and older brothers get together to try to devise some way of making the boys' school life more of a preparation for their mature life, their task must be to find some method of teaching these fundamental facts of life, in a manner attractive enough to overcome the boys' natural dislike for application and restraint.

To make a beginning they will do well to connect their instruction with some activity in which the boys feel a keen and general interest, and for this purpose nothing is more available than young America's craze for athletics. The preliminary steps need not be complicated. Perhaps the idea of "doing something for the boys" originates at the men's social club, or is talked over on the train which carries many of the fathers to and from busi-

ness, or perhaps the idea appeals to only one man: in any case the work is best left to a committee of one, consisting of the man who is most able and willing to give the necessary time. Probably there will be few enough candidates for such a position, but where a choice is possible the qualities governing it should be: sympathy and patience with boys, and the ability to get along with them, to rouse their interest, to gain their respect and affection. Sometimes a father has these qualities, more often the work can be better done by a younger man,—perhaps a teacher in the high school, an older brother, an ex-pupil of the school, all the better if he had made a name for himself in athletics. At all events whoever is most available is appointed organizer for the boys' activities, while the others interested in the movement support him as much as possible from the background.

The organizer first gets the sanction of the school authorities for his project, then suggests to a few of the older boys the formation of an athletic organization, or if there is already such an organization, the remodeling it along lines of greater efficiency. There is little chance of their being any hitch here; the project is sure to be greeted with enthusiasm. The principal of the school is asked to announce a mass meeting, and assign a room for it. At this meeting the organizer explains his plan in terms the

boys can understand. Perhaps he has a constitution already prepared, perhaps he leaves that till later. In any case he should have no difficulty in persuading the boys to acclaim all essential features:

Meetings are to be conducted according to parliamentary law. This is for two reasons: first, because parliamentary law almost always interests the boys; second, because an early familiarity with it, even the slightest familiarity, will save them from awkwardness when they grow older and join larger organizations where it is almost universally used.

The meetings are to be held every week, or every two weeks, as seems desirable. They should not be too infrequent or interest will lag. The officers are a *President,* who presides at meetings and appoints minor committees; a *Secretary,* who keeps the minutes of meetings, posts notices of meetings, writes letters; a *Treasurer,* who receives dues (which are small enough to bar no pupil), gives and takes receipts for all money which passes through his hands (a pad with blank receipt forms can be had for five or ten cents at a stationery store), keeps books (the organizer suggests and explains a simple system) and makes reports at stated meetings.

Probably there also should be one or two *Caretakers* of club property, whose duty it is to see that bats, balls and whatever else is owned in common, is put away after each playtime.

All these officers are elected by the club. There should be perhaps four elections every school year, and no boy should be eligible for any office for two consecutive terms (so that as many boys as possible can have the experience of responsibility.

In addition to these regular officers, various enterprises as they are undertaken are referred to committees specially appointed or elected for the business in hand.

There should be one "honorary member," an adult whose duty it is to be present at meetings whenever possible, to be always ready to advise any member of the club, and generally to suggest desirable ways and means. This honorary member will at first naturally be the organizer of the club. Later it would promote good feeling and cooperation if other men can be found to take their turn at this important work.

If nothing more is accomplished than the organization of such a club, the boys will gain a good deal from the habit of managing common interests in common, from the familiarity with the principles of majority rule and delegated authority so usual in the management of the adult world. But it is to be hoped that the foundation of such a club will be only the first step, that from it will follow naturally other activities even more valuable in the formation of character.

Whether the club accomplishes much or little will depend chiefly on the ability of the honorary member to arouse the boys' interest, and to devise means for employing it profitably. He must never forget that though he may regard it as an educational expedient, from the boys' point of view the club exists to promote athletics; therefore, he should play fair, do his best to help all athletic projects and trust to the education coming in as a by-product.

Much can be done to give the boys' athletics a better tone than they would have undirected. Of course the boys' chief interest will be in putting into the field a football and a baseball team to compete with the teams of other schools. The honorary member may question the wisdom of this, but such a proceeding is so taken for granted nowadays that he can not oppose it without losing much of his hold on the boys. The best he can do negatively is to use his influence to discourage the boys from undertaking games with teams outside their class, and to keep off the team any boy especially likely to be injured. Positively, if the school is a fair-sized one, he can do something to counteract the usual result of inter-school athletics—eleven boys doing all the playing while fifty others wave flags and cheer—by organizing several junior teams each with a schedule of its own. He can do still more by encouraging the playing of games in which many can participate.

Tennis and handball are excellent fun; even on a limited playground many games can go on at the same time, and by taking turns at the courts a great many boys can get a great deal of exercise in an afternoon. If the boys want more formal competition, the honorary member can suggest a tournament which includes every player in the school. The two best players are appointed captains and each in turn chooses a boy till all are chosen on one side or the other. The tournament is started by the boys chosen last on each side (naturally the poorest players) playing each other. Then the next-to-the-last boys play, and so on, the quality of the game increasing until the meeting of the two captains forms the climax. The side winning most matches wins the tournament.

The same idea may be used to give an interest to wrestling, which, by the way, should be more encouraged in school athletics; and a relay race participated in by the whole school is a stirring affair. The course may be around a running track, if the school has one, or around a course marked on the playground, or it may be around a city block if that is not too long for the little ones. Sides are chosen as for the tennis tournament, and the two slowest runners begin. Immediately the two runners next on the list take their places at the starting point, but neither can start till the runner of his side completes

the circuit and touches his hand. As soon as the fresh runner is off, another of his side jumps to the starting point, and so on till all the runners of one side have been around the circuit. When a number of boys compete, the fortunes of the race will swing back and forth from one side to the other and the resulting excitement and hilarity are intense.

So far suggestions have been made for persuading the boys to manage their affairs in common, to play instead of watching a team play; but (from the point of view of the honorary member) even more important work can be done in helping them improve their playground. At the worst they may have no playground at all, and if their school happens to be situated in the midst of a very large city, little can be done to provide them with one for their exclusive use. But most large cities either provide public playgrounds open to all boys or set aside parts of certain parks for games. The honorary member should himself investigate these possibilities, report them to the club, and advise the committee of boys appointed as to the proper form in which to apply for the desired privilege. As much as possible, of course, he should let the boys do the necessary talking and writing, coming forward himself only if the city authorities require a guarantee by some older men for the boys' character. Similarly perhaps admission can be gained during cer-

tain uncrowded hours to a Y. M. C. A. gymnasium, or, perhaps, to the gymnasium of another school. But when all is said, probably the best thing boys living in a large city can do, is to plan to get out of it as often as possible. The more Saturdays that can be occupied by excursions (of as many boys as can be persuaded to go) into the country, the better it will be for the boys' physical and moral health; and the more fathers and uncles who will volunteer to take their turn at accompanying such expeditions, the better for the relations between the generations.

Only a small proportion of American boys, however, go to schools situated more than a moderate walking distance from the outskirts of town, and for the great majority, the use of some vacant ground can be secured without charge or for so small a price that the school directors or a committee of fathers will hardly confess themselves unwilling to pay it. It is well enough that the playground should be secured by those with more financial resources than the boys can command, but it would be a pity if the elders in a burst of generosity should equip it outright. Any money they may be willing to contribute should be spent for tools and raw materials, leaving to the boys the tonic experience of working for what they want. The honorary member should explain the situation to the club: "We have now a place to play, but it would

be much more suited to our games if we could grade off the high places and fill in the lower ones. Such and such men have promised to lend wheelbarrows, shovels, picks (or have promised to buy them for us). Now we all ought to do our part of this work, and as we have many more hands than tools, I suggest that we divide up into squads and work at this job in turn." In a club of fifty boys, ten gang leaders should be appointed or elected, and they should choose in turn one helper until ten gangs of five boys each are made up. Then a schedule is drawn up showing at what time during the day each squad has the right to the tools. If one wheelbarrow, three shovels, and a couple of picks are available, one squad can work; if more tools are at hand, two or more squads can work at the same time. First the ground is loosened, a moderate load is shoveled into the barrow, then the biggest boy takes the handles and two other boys take hold of the sides to keep the barrow from tipping; they push it to a low spot and dump it there, while the other two boys of the squad are loosening ground for the next load. After ten or fifteen minutes' activity the boys stop to rest or play, and the work is carried on by the squad next on the time schedule. Stones too large to be loaded (even if they are fairly large boulders) can be disposed of by digging a hole near them, and then after every one is out of the hole, crumbling

the earth between the stone and the hole away with a shovel till the stone rolls over of its own weight and falls in. Work can be carried on before school, at recess, in the afternoon; or even better, it can be put off till vacation, and help give the boys some steady useful occupation in that critical period, usually so devoted to listlessness or mischief. With such a system of squads working only for short periods even fairly little boys can move a perfect mountain of earth, and enjoy every minute of the work.

With the field graded, new projects will be suggested and undertaken. Perhaps drain tile will be laid under a tennis court; perhaps a fence for a handball court can be built. The honorary member will, of course, try to gauge the boys' enthusiasm and act accordingly in backing or discouraging various propositions. When the boys respond freely, and really like the work, more or less general improvement of school grounds may be undertaken, walks of gravel or concrete made, trees or shrubs planted; but it is always well not to count on much altruism from human nature. A certain amount of public work the boys may consent to, but their interest will generally be centered in the things they themselves value. Just what and how many these things may be, will vary with different situations and different sets of boys. Perhaps they can throw

up a low dike of earth around their field, flood it, and let it freeze for a skating pond, perhaps they can manage a shower bath; surely they can augment their manual training (too often concentrated on bench work) by constructing a shed in which to store their athletic paraphernalia. Other activities will suggest themselves, some may be little worth doing, some will be bungled; but the elders must be patient: if the boys are honestly doing their best to get what they want by their own efforts instead of trying to wheedle it out of some one else they have gone a long way toward mature self-support.

While the athletic club was still an experiment, its adult backers did well in helping out when money had to be spent, but later when the playground is in usable shape and the habit of "working for what you want" is well established, further contributions would be unwise. Instead of giving the boys money for their enterprises it is better to give them chances to earn it, even if the second alternative is much more bother to their parents than the first. Suppose the club wants to buy baseball gloves for its team and has no money in its treasury for the purpose. The situation might be met by circulating a subscription list among the fathers and business men of the town. But a much better method would be for the honorary member to propose that the club undertake to earn the neces-

sary money. What the boys can do depends, of course, on the boys themselves, on their parents, on the sort of community in which they live; but something can always be found if it is looked for patiently enough. In almost any community, for instance, there are parental shoes to be blacked. Suppose twenty men agree to pay five cents a day for this service, and will perhaps lend the necessary brushes: if the boys divide up in groups of two, and each pair has one or two houses on its list (depending on the number of boys), then in half an hour's work after dinner every night, the club could add a dollar to its athletic-goods fund, and its members could add a very wholesome experience with the conditions of real life. In most towns and villages there are a number of small services for which the parents would be willing to pay if they understood the educational advantage involved: there are packages to be carried to and from the express station, letters to be taken to the post-office, ashes to be carried away, grass to be cut in summer, leaves raked up in autumn—perhaps a few tradesmen would consent to let the boys do part of their delivery work. None of these things is required by any household every day; but every day two or three households will want help of one kind or another. It would be easy for the boys to separate after school in small squads and each to walk through one section of

town. At every house where they see a piece of red cardboard hanging out of the kitchen window they stop, inquire what there is to be done, do it (or if it should be a long job, get one or two other squads to help them do it) and receive the price agreed on beforehand for that sort of work. It will be noticed that I speak always of the boys moving in small squads. That is because a single boy is usually daunted by a few minutes of effort while several boys hearten one another. I have not forgotten the old proverb: "Two boys are half a boy, three boys are no boy at all!" But that was written when it was assumed that the boys could be made to work only by authority imposed from above; naturally the effect of combination in such conditions would be to multiply the spirit of revolt till it overcame the fear of authority. But this plan I am proposing for work (if it works at all), because the boys understand the conditions and freely choose (just as their elders do) to do something that is not enjoyable so that they may get in return for it something which is enjoyable. Where this choice is clearly made, three or four boys will have a group conscience and group perseverance greater than that of any individual boy.

One more lesson the athletic club activities can be made to inculcate. The club will need money for

some project—to buy hockey sticks perhaps—and need it in a hurry. If they wait till they earn it, the ice will be gone. What can be done? Well, if they have shown themselves moderately conscientious in sticking to their previous enterprises, the honorary member will explain to them something of the system of credit. "If your fathers wanted to build a new schoolhouse," he would say, "they would not try to pay for it all at once. They would borrow as much as they needed from a bank, or from a number of men who happened to have money lying idle. A little of this, together with a small rental for the use of all the money, they would pay off every year, until finally everything is paid back and the schoolhouse owned without debt. This is how the world's business is done. There is no danger in it, if the payments are honestly met and the repayment completed before the object bought wears out. Now these hockey sticks will last perhaps two seasons, but when spring comes we will not be interested in hockey and it will go against the grain to go on paying for the sticks. Let us therefore agree to pay back one-third of what we borrow at the end of December, another third at the end of January and the last at the end of February. Men lend money only when they have good reason to believe that it will be paid back. You have worked faith-

fully at grading the grounds and you have worked to raise money for a football; the men of this town know it and your credit is good with them. Therefore if you will agree to pay back the money in monthly instalments, as I have suggested, they will advance it, and you can have your hockey sticks in time for the first ice. Only don't vote to borrow until you have talked the problem all over, have agreed that you want the sticks enough to work for them, and unless you are certain that you can earn enough to pay the instalments. Don't make a guess at it. Figure how much you earned during the last three months, see if you can reasonably expect as much work and as much time to do it in during the next three. Don't make any vague cheerful guesses; figure as closely as you can. Then if you see your way clear: all right. If it looks doubtful: get along with fewer sticks or with none at all." Described in some such way, the practise of borrowing (a practise that is harmful only when abused, and when used reasonably is a great stimulus toward forethought and endeavor) must seem to the boys a useful tool; not as it frequently does to young men who suddenly come into contact with it for the first time—a magician's wand by which all sorts of costly and desirable things can be had without working for them. This false view is ab-

surd, of course, but it is not uncommon. It causes a great deal of heart-burning, of disgrace and family disunion. And no work ought to seem too hard or tedious to parents, if it promises to give their boys a saner view, while the boys are still within reach of parental advice and help.

One last word to parents. Don't expect too much! Boys will always be boys and girls will be girls. To mature eyes youth will probably always appear fitful and improvident. If you can not persevere through indifference and backsliding, or if you send your children to school with a feeling of relief that now some one else is responsible for them and you can have a little time to yourself, my advice to you is to let things go on the way they are. But if your idea of parenthood involves never-failing endeavor for the children's good; if your idea of a school is an institution where, under the best possible conditions, children are prepared to live the best possible mature lives, then go ahead! Experiment with the suggestions in this chapter; improve on them. If one plan fails, invent another. Try all the methods you can think of. Never lose sight of the guiding principle that parents are responsible for their children's education even more than for their food and clothing; that no education is adequate which does not train character as well as

mind! Be patient! Persevere! And when your children reach the age when false steps bring cruel punishments, you will not be without your reward.

CHAPTER XVI

NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW TOWNS

THE school-lunch, the sewing classes, the boys' organizations, which have been described above, are, after all, only makeshifts, set down in order to show that it is possible to bring some real processes of life into the school without waiting; that an energetic and devoted parent can, now, to-day, set in motion some simple machinery which will awaken in children that realizing sense of what has to be done in the world, a knowledge that always brings in its train (with unspoiled human beings) the excellent instinct to rise up and do it.

Beyond these few temporary devices, every enlightened parent should be on the alert to study the specifications proposed for every school building and to fight any plan to construct it along the old lines as energetically as he would fight a grafting candidate for mayor. The wrong mayor occupying his office one term would not be comparable as a calamity to the spending of many thousands of the citizens' money in erecting another imposing, many-

windowed edifice when for infinitely less there might be created a "school home" with space and air and freedom as its first characteristics.

Let him stand adamant against the costly building which makes no provision for the child's life beyond the purely, formally intellectual. Let him remember how little home life children get nowadays at home, and insist that they shall get it somewhere in the twentieth century. The first need for children if they are to have a natural life is space, and the sense of moral freedom which space brings. Less money in the school buildings and more on the grounds around it, would result in an institution the very look of which would be stimulating and comforting to a child's heart. If space is too expensive in the region where the children live (although an American town should blush to admit that what is essential for the children's welfare is too expensive to procure for them), why, then transport the children out to where space is to be had. In less enlightened days they were transported away from space and light and air and freedom into the rabbit-warren of a big building. Now let the same machinery be reversed, and carry them out to their place in the sun.

This is, of course, a counsel of perfection: the ideal toward which to work. The establishment of outdoor schools, with their simplicity and economy

would be a great step forward in our advance toward a school organization where most of the money goes to the essentials of instruction and character building, and very little toward the unessentials of plate glass and janitor service. But in spite of the successful example of the outdoor school in Buffalo described in Chapter XIV, a school which flourishes in a climate as vigorous as any in our country, it will probably be impossible for a good many years to shake ordinary people, especially those composing school boards, out of the steam-heat superstition. At least parents can make a beginning now by agitating for simpler school buildings, and more humanizing surroundings, for more space about the school, for provisions to be made for breaking up the great masses of children into smaller irregular groups, in which individuality has more play. Conditions vary so extremely in different American communities that it would be unprofitable to set down in detail all possible suggestions for the partial transformation of the existing office building known as the public school, into a children's educational home. The essential is to present to ingenious American minds the extreme desirability of this transformation. Any student of the much-described Gary system will get from that excellent source of original ideas numberless suggestions for bringing the school children of

his region under a régime that approximates civilized social life-in-common, and under which in the natural routine of the day there occur sufficient opportunities for the children to take responsibility. Or if any one will write to the school authorities of Newton, Massachusetts, for detailed information about the splendid home-making course of study in their high school, he will not fail to see a dozen ways to approach his own problem.

From people in temperate or warm climates, much may reasonably be hoped in the way of more complete action taken without great delay. As soon as the description of the Park School in Buffalo appeared in a magazine it aroused the liveliest interest in Pacific Coast dwellers, and among school authorities in the southern states. A great many letters asking for more detailed information were received from people in those mild climates, who were quick to see how completely adapted to their needs are the simplicity, the directness, the absence of mechanical complication characteristic of an outdoor school. It is for people in such favored regions to show the way for the rest of us, and for them the following detailed information is set down. The cost given is for work done in the city of Buffalo and would certainly be less in a town or village.

A bungalow thirty by thirty feet is amply large for a class of thirty children. One solid wall is pro-

vided, on which to put the blackboard and necessary shelves. Canvas curtains that roll up and down on rollers, are hung on the other three sides, two or more of which may thus be closed on stormy days to keep out the rain or snow. Or sliding glass windows may be put in on the two sides from which storms generally come and a canvas curtain used only for the fourth side. Four hundred dollars put up such a building in Buffalo, without any fancy work such as children's individual closets, shelves, book cases, etc. If possible the children themselves should help in the construction of these furnishings. This keeps down the cost and directly furthers the purpose of the school, which is to supply occasions for the exercise of initiative on the part of the children.

The question of a gymnasium is solved for the most part by the simple expedient of having space about the schoolroom. For stormy days a play-porch can be used. This need be nothing more than a roof with supporting pillars and canvas curtains —hardly more expensive than the shed which any thrifty farmer builds to shelter his mowing-machine and hay-rake. Formal gymnasium equipment is exceedingly expensive, and fortunately not at all necessary for children. Fresh air and space are the most necessary elements in gymnastic work, and these can be supplemented by very simple appa-

ratus, a part of which the children can make for themselves. All Swedish gymnastics and folk-dancing need nothing but room enough to stand and move about. A pair of rings can be bought for seventy cents and hung by rope that may cost perhaps thirty cents. A trapeze can be made by suspending a stout section of a shovel handle (or a pitchfork handle) from ropes. Bean-bag boards, and rope-quoits can be made as part of the hand work. A big rope hanging from a beam is not an expensive item, and is a source of endless fun and exercise in nimbleness.

The manual-training department can also be handled under almost any sort of roof, if the children are hardy and used to working outdoors. After the beginning, to a very considerable extent the children can make the necessary shelves, closets, nail-chests, etc., and their interest is unusually augmented by doing it. A fair estimate for buying work benches, equipment for benches and necessary tools, is fifteen dollars per child.

The uses to which the workshop is put, after it is once fitted up by the children, are almost without end. Just as a "handy man" finds no limit to the odd jobs possible in making improvements about his home, so the children, if they have the home feeling toward their school, never weary of working for it. The problem will not be to fill in vacant time, but to find time and material for all the children want to

do. The element of space around each grade house means that the construction need not be limited to book-racks and letter boxes, or the other small objects usually manufactured in manual-training classes. The exactitude and accuracy needed for such articles often makes younger children rather nervous and, feeling the enterprise a difficult one, they incline to lean heavily on the instruction of their teacher, and frequently never undertake any other similar enterprise on their own responsibility. They are always greatly more stimulated and heartened to independent effort if they can put up small buildings, chicken-houses, rabbit-hutches, play-houses, tool-sheds and the like, rough structures, where an eighth of an inch is not a hanging matter, where an hour's work makes an appreciable difference in the look of the thing, where a group of children can work together, and the result of which is an actual structure, a water-proof shelter, a home in miniature.

New communities, or those growing fast and needing new schools have thus an unequaled opportunity to make a fresh start along the lines of the school home with natural surroundings. One great advantage of the plan is that it can grow with the growth of the school population. The very low cost of construction and maintenance of the separate little bungalows for each grade will more than make

up for the saving which might be effected by having all under one roof. The natural breaking up of the children into small groups, often self-divided, means that one teacher can easily care for as many or more children as under the present plan. If those who have finished a recitation, or a piece of work are allowed to go out to feed the hens or weed the garden or sweep the snow from the walks, or if they have a piece of school-repairing on hand; or if they can be detailed to set the table for the common luncheon; if, in short, there are in the school anything like the simple, natural and varied useful activities of a home, there will be less of the sterile vacant sitting still and looking out of the window, which is one of the curses of the mass system of education.

Children occupied in this way need only occasional attention from the teacher, who can concentrate her efforts on the small group actually engaged in reciting. She can demand of them concentrated, brisk, animated, mental activity. She can obtain this because she is close to every one, and because the children can be very closely graded so that only those of approximately the same capacity work together. The general moral atmosphere of such a grade home is, of course, the most important item in the detached bungalow outdoor system. The fact that they have their own home which they may decorate

as they please, which reflects the individuality of their group, banishes the irresponsible indifferentism of children whose schoolroom is precisely like one of forty others under the same roof. The attitude of such children is apt to be like that of the professional traveler with his impersonal disregard for the management of the hotel, the train or the steamship which chances for the moment to shelter him. He has no affection for any of those places, little interest in their problems, less sympathy for their difficulties, because he has no responsibility for their conduct. The child with a school home is more like a man living with his family under his own roof. He is alive to the needs, the processes, the possibilities of his surroundings, because they are his. Children who have a large part in the responsibility for the welfare of their own small school home and who feel a pride in its attractiveness will no more mischievously deface or harm it than would other property owners. They do not need a teacher's watchful eye as they step about at their share of the various tasks of their home. The teacher herself is relieved of a vast amount of necessity for discipline and nervous strain, by the abandonment of school conditions inherently unnatural for children, by the pure air, the quiet privacy of the schoolroom, and by the absence of the necessity

constantly to invent "busy work" which is interesting enough to keep a child immobile at his desk. If the plain ordinary conditions of the plain ordinary home are somewhat reproduced, the question of "busy work" settles itself. There is enough to go around.

If anybody is asking himself why such an earnest exhortation to a new kind of school should be a part of a book on responsibility for children, let him ask himself if he can think of any single change in American child life which would do more for the elimination of passivity and irresponsibility and go further toward the development of the natural human impulse to take hold and help run things. Just as the fact of the tremendous numbers in a great city (however stimulating it may be to some temperaments) indubitably dissolves away some of the sense of individual responsibility from each member of the throng, no lover of childhood can deny the deadening, numbing effect upon children—especially younger ones—of the present mass system of education.

We therefore look to our southern and Pacific Coast cousins to be the first to set us the good example of the school-colony of small cottages close to the earth. But it is very much to be hoped that people in less obviously tempting climates may take

courage from the zero temperature of Buffalo and the successful conduct of the Park School there. If the open-air rooms seem too radical an experiment, small enclosed bungalows could be used, without violating any essential element of the plan. These could be heated by small individual stoves or by steam brought through underground pipes. They may be constructed of almost any material and according to almost any design. All that is essential is that they give sufficient shelter and light, and that they are *not* large, elaborately finished or expensive.

Is it too much to hope that in time a "public school" may cease to mean a towering brick building with paved streets all around it, but that instead visitors will be taken to walk through the grounds of a public school as now through the campus of a well-kept college. It will be one of the beauty-spots of the town, and leading citizens instead of rolling under their tongues the cost of velvet curtains for the stage of the school auditorium, will learn to descant proudly upon the economy and thrift shown by the children in the administration of the small home-like buildings scattered about under the trees. Such visitors will not regret the loss of the handsome architectural features of the older steam-heated schools, because they will see

about these attractive school homes an infinity of enterprise suitable to the ages of the children of each grade.

Even the casual visitor may be relied upon to feel thankfully the blessed absence of the blurring, smudging, feature-obliterating pressure of great numbers compactly massed. He will feel that those schoolhouses, each with its own individuality, symbolize the child life of the school, protected by the simple element of space from the paralyzing sense of crowds which makes the realization of individual responsibility, even indeed of individual existence, difficult for the individual to achieve.

The author is perfectly aware that with a perhaps unjustified contrary-mindedness, she is running directly counter to much of the present trend of the educational world; and she knows, from having tried the idea on various mixed audiences, how revolutionary and reactionary must sound any protest against assembling children in big modern, efficiently run school buildings. Perhaps it may be well to add a few words more, in direct answer to the objections, which have almost certainly arisen in the mind of the reader familiar with the splendid enthusiasm that has been expended on improving school conditions by gathering children into large central schools.

Of course the large central school, in the midst

of a population dense enough and compactly enough massed about the school so that the children have not far to go, is too natural and economical an educational expedient to expect to change except as a result of deeply changed public opinion. For such situations as in all city situations the elements of air and space are exceedingly difficult to secure. In the distant future we may see all such institutions housed in parks or other open places; but an immense readjustment would be involved.

However, none of this holds true for the country. A very large part of America is still rural, and yet the tendency has been to bring children from the country together into large masses in big buildings. The ground can be cleared of at least one possible misunderstanding by making the frank admission at once that few school conditions could be much worse than the district or country school as it now frequently exists, a one-room building sheltering forty or fifty children, ungraded, in charge of a badly trained, underpaid teacher who knows nothing outside of books. It is not surprising that patriotic Americans revolted at this state of things and gave their thought, effort and money freely to remove the children from these objectionable conditions. The remarks on schools in this book are meant to raise the question whether the same amount of time, effort and money freely

expended on country schools, *where they stand,* would not have resulted in still better conditions? Certain late developments in very modern schools undoubtedly suggest that they would.

The chief reasons for the gathering of children in large schools in centers of population are: that a principal or superintendent can supervise the whole system, that there is an economy in fuel and in administration; that the children can be better graded,—and better grading means an immense improvement in instruction as all teachers know. The reasons against large central schools have not been so clearly presented to the public, nor indeed so clearly thought out by educators. The most apparent, of course, is the very objectionable ride to school by the children. Any one who has had any personal experience of the actual working of the scheme for transporting numbers of children long (or even comparatively short) distances to and from school, will admit without argument the entirely undesirable character of the hour or hour and a half spent in this way. The children are not exercising. They are frequently exposed to the weather, or if not they are shut up in bad air; they are crowded together and practically without restraint or supervision from any adult, because the driver of the stage can scarcely be expected to do more than attend to the safe driving of his horses

or car. The expense of a "matron" to accompany the scholars is in most cases far too great to be added to the already considerable expense of the school-stage itself. The time they spend in this way is almost entirely unprofitable and sometimes worse. Finally the expense is astonishingly large —frequently quite enough to have paid for an assistant to the teacher at the old district school. Other things being equal, it certainly seems, in this era of cheap small motor-cars easier to transport one principal or superintendent from school to school, instead of transporting all the children in to him.

What are some of the other elements involved in taking children into a big central school? One result is that the question of "education" is still further removed from the lives of the citizens of that region. Their children are taken away into strange surroundings; they play with children whom their parents do not know and never will know. They are in an environment with every detail of which their parents are wholly unfamiliar. The line of cleavage between home and school, already more than deep enough, becomes tragically absolute and complete. Possibilities for relating home activities to school life become faded and remote, because all collaboration between parent and teacher is carried on at such long range. The chil-

dren are taken away from their home surroundings, where their parents live and must continue to live, and, at a very impressionable age, are strongly inoculated with the crowd virus—the virus that works so strongly in confined city-dwellers as to make them positively panic-stricken by an experience of the wholesome, strengthening solitude, which is an occasional accompaniment of country life. A large part of the day of these expatriated country children is spent in the midst of city life, from which they return to their homes for relatively brief periods. This would be all very well if our aim was to wean them away from the country-side; but it is not; quite the contrary.

Of course, the reason why we think it all very well now, or at least the best we can do, is because we have convinced ourselves that a room in the big, modern, several-storied school building is the best place for a child to learn how to live. If we could but see that the original country schoolhouse, converted into a school home, would supply a country child (any child, for that matter) with a more natural, healthful background for his life, we would at once concede that everything else points unmistakably toward giving him his schooling where his life is rooted instead of tearing him up by force out of that native soil.

To be sure the "district school" must not be left

the dreary little anachronism it now is. But the task of making it over need frighten no one, for dreary as it looks, the old-fashioned district school is one of the most promising fields for the modern transformation of a school into a place for children to learn by leading natural lives. It has by its physical remoteness escaped being sucked into the maelstrom of mechanical complications, and offers an opportunity for an almost fresh start. If the children and the community can be made to see it as a poor little neglected home, unbeautified and uncared for, generous American instincts will do the rest. And it profits by having little to begin with. The blessed attributes of space and moral elbow-room are there,—ours for the asking. Anything the children do to beautify it shows so plainly! A move to make the school the center of the total child life of the region encounters no uneasy janitor, endangers no expensive heating plant, upsets no elaborate relays of scrub-women. Lumber is cheap. The men of the community are all familiar with the process of putting up roughly constructed buildings. It would be quite possible to use the "State aid" money which now goes to the central school, in adding a room or two, or a teacher or two to the country school. Everything is on a plain homely scale of expenditure, and so money goes much further than when the building is handsome

and everything must come up to the standard. Children up to the eighth grade are not a whit better off with costly apparatus of any sort; and children of that age are the ones most helplessly responsive to the alien conditions of a large school in a center of population.

Lastly, many, many precious advantages belong to the country school, without money and without price. There is space about it for gardening and truck-farming; there is still lingering on in the country in spite of industrialism a tradition of self-help for children, which would make poultry raising and similar activities no startling innovations; there is the Bureau of Education at Washington more than eager to cooperate with suggestions and practical help. There is above all the fact that the organic relation of the school to the community can be made so much plainer to the average human eye in the country where numbers are not so confusing. It is possible not only to induce the people of the community to pay school-taxes, which most Americans can always be induced to do; but to induce them to give something of themselves to the school, to understand, to feel that it is *their* institution. Even if a specially trained teacher of agriculture can not be afforded (although I do not see why one could not be passed about from school

to school as now from room to room) if the best farmer in the region will come and show the boys how to prepare a piece of ground for sowing seed, the boys will learn a great deal and the farmer will never again be able to hold himself aloof from the schools as in the past. All the plans proposed in the preceding chapter for the active cooperation of parents in the schools, are particularly practicable in a country community where everybody is on familiar terms, and there is a felt solidarity in society.

All this will require effort, of course, effort and money and intelligence and tact and cooperation between all available forces working for our school system. But will not all this effort result in school conditions which are more natural, more wholesome, less nerve-trying, and above all, more calculated to draw from each individual child all the capacity for self-reliance and responsibility within him? Progress goes traditionally in a spiral, not in a straight course; and I venture to think that the quaintness of its advance was never more obvious than in the fact that its great circling sweep has brought it around again to a point where the much-despised country school offers the best of all possible fields for reconstruction along the most modern and advanced lines.

CHAPTER XVII

A PLEA FOR COMMON SENSE

WHAT follows here is not intended for people of strong character, people who need only to see their duty to rejoice in performing it, people for whom no labor is too great if they may thereby accomplish a desirable end. All such men and women (if any such exist) need to read no further. But ordinary average mothers and fathers are not cast in any such Spartan mold and my own erring and feeble nature makes me quite aware of what must have been in the minds of many a reader as he has perused the preceding chapters. I know (having uttered it myself) his unspoken exclamation of, "Oh, what a lot of work!" I know (having felt it) his sinking of heart as he contemplates the labor involved in carrying out all these suggestions; and I have a word or two to say to him, as from one very human being to another.

In the first place, probably no one person could carry out all the suggestions in this book, or in any other similar book which attempts to help people better to order their lives. Nor is this unfortunate, since very likely some of the detailed suggestions

would not suit the conditions in many American lives. In child-training, as in everything else, the practicable program is: do the best you can, and every day make that best a little better.

Second,—yes, of course, it is hard to teach children self-reliance; but it is hard to earn a living; it is hard to have a good garden; it is hard to play the piano; it is hard to do anything that is worth doing. And nothing is more worth while than an honest effort to improve the relations of parents and children; nothing is more important to children, to parents, to the world of to-morrow.

In the third place, let the parent, flinching with a natural human impulse from giving up so much of his life to his children, remember that he is in the situation of the general who has burned his bridges behind him. No going back is possible. Go forward he must. The only choice he has left is between doing well or ill the undertaking which he, and nobody else, has set before him.

Lest this consideration, true as it is, sound too grim and forbidding, I hasten to say finally what every father and every mother knows, that they are an unusually fortunate and gifted pair of parents, who can find in life anything at all comparable to the job of bringing up their children, for interest, for unexpectedness, for sanity and laughter and health and joy.

Isn't it sometimes said that the by-products of a process are among its most valuable results? This axiom may exaggerate conditions in industrial processes, but I am inclined to think that in the matter of child-study, it is no more than sober fact.

I do not minimize the effects of more knowledge of child psychology upon the lives of the young. Certainly the study of that branch of learning, even the discovery that it exists, has incalculably softened the fate of children. The way in which children of a hundred years ago were educated and trained seems as remote from us as any grotesque incomprehensible custom of feudal times. We would not permit a dog to be treated as little boys in country boarding-schools were treated, apparently, in Dickens' day. When it comes to that, we would not if we could help it, permit a dog to be treated as many of our grandparents treated our parents; either those who beat their children's bodies and browbeat their souls by steam-roller discipline, or those others who were hysterically indulgent and ruined their children's lives by spoiling them as did Thackeray's appallingly devoted mothers. We have learned that neither dog nor child can emerge unharmed from such a background, and having learned this, we make what is really, human nature being considered, quite a heroic effort to see that they have something better.

Just to have learned of the dangers to young human organisms from lack of sympathy and understanding on the part of their parents, puts a moral responsibility on us to be as sympathetic and understanding as we may, in the same way that our knowledge of the dangers of typhoid germs in dirty milk involves us in the responsibility to see that our children drink clean milk. Our grandparents, certainly as full of natural good will towards their children as we, never having heard of these dangers, never bothered their heads about them. We can be sure they never did by looking at the high percentages of deaths in childhood in their period, and at the large number of "queer characters," half-crazed though perhaps harmless individuals, who figure prominently in all family talk of old times. Were there not always in the stories told you by your grandparents' generation, a number of odd sticks, Dickens-grotesques, people who never adjusted themselves normally to life, old-maid aunts who were agitated if left alone a moment with any kind of a male, old bachelor uncles terrified at the rustle of a woman's skirts, elderly cousins who had not been out of doors for years, or who went gloved, day and night, or who fainted away at the sight of a toad, or a cat, or a man with red hair. Such misshapen, mutilated, enfeebled characters are frequent in all the glimpses of old times which I ever had

first-hand from those who had lived through them, —and who would have been vastly surprised at the idea that they might in any way have been held responsible for such tragedies. Yes, there is a good deal of evidence to show that the study of child-psychology on the part of parents has considerably lessened the dangers of being a child.

This was to be expected. But it has also considerably cheered and brightened and safeguarded parental life. Even when imperfectly understood, as it often is, it has led fathers and mothers out of the old, dumb, helpless, cave-man bewilderment and suffering when something goes wrong with children. When a nice baby grew up into a little boy who seemed incorrigibly rough and wild and bad, parents used to have before them the same choice between two ways of taking this—which lay before primitive man when his crops did not thrive.

They could (as later fathers were wont to do) show their pain and disappointment and anxiety by rage and King-Canute commands of "halt there!" addressed to natural processes. Or they could (as mothers often did) droop and pine submissively, helpless before affliction.

Modern children, like modern crops, are no more exempt from threatening to go bad on our hands than those of earlier periods. But we no longer think that crops turn yellow because the seed was

planted in the dark of the moon, and that there is no use in trying now to repair so fatal an error. Nor because the rough boy's uncle ran away and became a pirate do we think there is no use trying to do anything with the boy,—because he always did take after that uncle. The study of child life, like that of plant life, reveals the existence of certain broad general laws as invariable as the arithmetical rule that you can't get something for nothing. Plants and children, we learn, need certain elements for healthy life, and if deprived of those will not thrive, no matter how authoritative and flogging a father they may have, nor how indulgent and sentimental a mother. When our newly transplanted cabbage plants lay down their heads and look discouraged, we do not nowadays make a ceremonial procession around the field beating on a tom-tom to scare away the evil spirits which have bewitched our garden. We water the ground in which the plants are growing and, with no surprise, watch them revive. When a human being who has been a gentle, pretty little girl becomes a rebellious, outrageous, critical and cynical adolescent, we no longer regard it as an inexplicable calamity and try tearfully to persuade her back into the pretty little girl chrysalis. We see to it that she has a chance to play her head off at tennis, we stop talking to her like a baby, and we do not deny that there are mysteries in life to

which we hold no keys; we confess to being ashamed of our own inaction in the matter of social injustice, put more thoughtful books in her way (or perhaps, on the contrary, see to it that she dances more)—send her to a summer camp where long gruelling canoe trips are taken, start singing, or fencing, or gardening lessons for her, give her some experience of social work—in short, in as many ways as our ingenuity and resources permit, water as best we can the ground into which her lengthening roots are plunging.

We are anxious about her during such a period, I admit, and often exasperated to the limit of endurance, but as a doctor is anxious and exasperated by an interesting patient, watchfully, hopefully, humanly. Such anxiety and exasperation is not to be compared for an instant to the impotent, raging, utterly uncomprehending parental anguish, the tragic breath of which still blows through some of the old stories of estranged parents and children which we have all heard from our older kinsfolk. There is no doubt about it, we parents have benefited quite as much as the children have, by learning a few of the elementary laws of child nature.

This, although nothing we counted on, is not surprising, since anything that improves the relation between two people must benefit one side as much as the other. The by-product which is really unex-

pected is the help we have all had, not as parents but in ordering our personal individual lives, from the information we gathered to help us in ordering the lives of our children. With the utmost simplicity of heart most of us used to forget that child-nature is human nature, and did not dream as we bent our brows over the books which told us what our children needed to be strong and normal that we were learning what we ourselves and everybody else need.

I do not, for instance, attribute wholly to the industrial revolution the marvellous rapidity with which public opinion has changed about the desirability of a parasitic, dependent life for women. Economic need alone perhaps would have forced out of the home-idleness the various classes of women who no longer were needed there. But they would have gone to the tune of lamentations on the part of the women themselves, and everybody else. This period of lamentation actually did not last out even one generation. Isn't there some connection between the general recognition, just about at that date, of children's need for purposeful activity, and the general acquiescence in women's going out to get it wherever it was to be found?

And our attitude towards insane people and criminals, has not that too been tempered by our finding out that children's tantrums are the result of natural

and *preventable* causes, not of Satanic visitations? Not to speak of a considerable improvement in our attitude about our own tantrums, for which we by no means feel the complacent tenderness our grandfathers had for theirs.

Have we finally, I wonder, I who wrote this book on Self-Reliance spelled with capital letters, and all the unknown readers who have bought (and I suppose read) so many copies of it that a new edition becomes necessary,—have we learned anything more about relying on ourselves from pondering over the ways to teach children to be self-dependent? I see, certainly, one field in which we would do well to stiffen our capacity for independent judgment and that is in the matter of specialists in child psychology. Yes, I know, nothing could sound more inconsistent after the recognition in the preceding pages of all the good they have done us. Let me explain myself.

We are, as I see it, in a period, as to psychology, which corresponds to the early period in the study of medicine; those chaotic years when folk-superstitions and profound folk-wisdom lay tangled in a heap of confusion, with new practitioners of a new science, sorting it over and trying to tell the true from the false. Those were years in which there was almost as much superstition and slavery to tradition in what was called medical practice as in the

head of any illiterate midwife. Doctors no longer, it was true, bled delicate boys hundreds of times a year as did the anxiously devoted physicians of Louis XIII in his adolescence; but some of their "treatments," read of to-day, chill the modern blood scarcely less. And yet they were advancing out of darkness. They were the pioneers of the white-clad host in hospitals and laboratories to-day who have learned to look through our flesh at our bones, who have made crookedly set arms and legs as uncommon as they were frequent a couple of generations ago, and who could no more mistake typhoid fever for appendicitis than we could mistake a dog for a cat.

They have come a long distance on the road to knowledge. But on the way they made some very queer digressions (did you ever hear of the blue glass craze, and how about walking barefoot in the dew?) And even now, be it said with all respect, they occasionally, in spite of microscopes and blood tests, make some very queer and very tragic mistakes.

Consider then, the difficulties in the way of the new science of "psychiatry," if that is what its name is to be. Earnest and devoted and enthusiastic (and once in a while level-headed) as its practitioners may be, they are still in the pioneer period of path-finding. They often find themselves obliged to back

up and start all over again because of some unexpected obstacle in the way of a route that looked quite open and clear. They are, as yet, only early explorers, mapping as best they can the main features of that new country, human behavior. But they know so little about whole areas of it, and are so ignorant of the proportions of the whole that they are still likely to mistake the Hudson for the North East passage, and to think they are in the suburbs of Cipango when they are on an uninhabited island in the West Indies.

This ignorance, avowed or unconscious, touches us all much more nearly than did the earlier fumblings of doctors towards a scientific basis for their art. The modern printing press makes us witness to nearly every false as well as every true discovery. In earlier days a doctor who had a theory that was a near-guess at a truth but far enough off to make it dangerous, killed and maimed a certain number of the patients in his clientele, and Fate let it go at that. Nowadays, a psychiatrist or psychologist who has a theory, writes a book about it which is printed by thousands, distributed to all the reading lists of Child Study groups in the country, and lies on the table of innumerable homes where there are children to be brought up. Perhaps, a year after, another specialist, with an opposite theory, sends out a refutation of this one. The second book finds its

way into the hands of some of the anxious mothers who read the first book, but not of all. And even if to every one, what then? What is the troubled mother of an actual living, flesh-and-blood small son to do, when one "authority" tells that her little boy would be much better off if he never saw her again and that she is shamefully betraying him if she kisses him good-night; while another theorist informs her with certainty that those people are always unstable and undeveloped who have not in childhood been made absolutely sure of the unshakable certainty of mother-love.

Well, I'm sure I haven't—any more than any one else—an infallible recipe that will ensure her always doing the right thing in such distracting circumstances. Having been there, and still being there, myself, I feel for her with all my heart. And all that I can suggest to her, as from one unprofessional mother to another, is that we use as much firm independent common sense as we can summon, that course being always the best for honest people to pursue when specialists fall out among themselves. A good stiff dose of self-reliance can't do us or our children any harm, I should say.

It may hearten us to remember that, although not learned, we must have acquired some sound general notions of the nature of human life, or we wouldn't have survived until now, and that theories

which utterly contradict those notions may well be suspected. (I quail as I set down this advice, remembering some of the insensate Thackerayean silliness among mothers I have seen. But I leave it firmly on the page when I call to mind some of the specialists I have encountered. Oh, children! children! how do you ever survive!) We know, after all, some of the simplest, most obvious needs of the human organism. I should say that it was reasonably safe to resist, in their name, any advice that comes to us, even in a highly recommended book, which seems to deprive our children of some of the recognized essentials of life. I was brought up on a story about John Morley in the years when he was in charge of Indian affairs. He had, I believe, issued some orders enforcing more respectful treatment of Hindus by English people. At once he was besieged by seasoned experienced Englishmen and women, who had lived all their lives in India and who assured him that never having visited that country, he could have no idea of the nature of the Hindu. "He *likes* to be bullied by an Englishman! —It gives him a sense of security, as showing that he has a real man to look up to. He would not understand any treatment which did not include robust old Anglo-Saxon chastisement." To which Morley replied that a man would be a fool who without specific evidence would say positively that

any proposition was either true or false. That not having lived in India he had, it was true, no first-hand evidence or experience of his own on this point. But that he had lived a long time with the human race and had, like every man of such experience, learned certain basic axioms of human behavior, among which was that no human being, anywhere at any time, loved and admired the man who kicked him. "There are," he added judiciously, "some propositions which are, in their very nature, of an inherent improbability."

I think parental readers of modern books on human behavior might do worse than pin this story, ponderous Victorian English and all, up over the mantelpiece of the family living-room, glancing at it when, for instance, they begin a new book, fresh from the hospital laboratory entitled "The Behaviour of Children in the Home."

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